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PEACE

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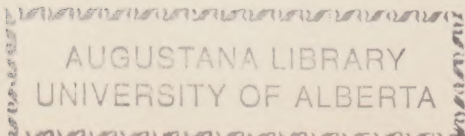


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PEACE



I

OUT in the west, the sea beats down upon a fifty mile stretch of long, low sandy beaches. It is the real sea — the Northern Sea, broad and free, untamed and unbroken — endless. Dark green and salt the great combers roll in from the western horizons, driven by the gales from the Arctic ice and the Channel, foam-white breakers driving forward out of the fogs with hissing crests, booming their deep and eternal organ tone from the farthest abysses. They crash upon the shore in white cata-racts, and smite the sand with long, booming roar that dies away in deadened thunder.

Up from the low sea strand struggles a harsh, gray land with heath brown hill and pale marshes strewn with giant boulders, treeless and barren; a land shut off from the east by a long, low barrier of mountains — a long ridge that seems endless, though here and there a little pond glows blue, or a great still lake. Here the wind moans day and night, and the gray weather lies low over the mountain plains, where the hare runs from stone to stone, and all kinds of brown and speckled wild fowl lie in their hidden nests and blink and doze.

Over all arches the sky, wide and gray, from the mountain barrier to the ocean and as far as one can see — the only light over the landscape. It holds

the eye always. And almost always it is full of clouds and storms; at times it sinks to earth and blankets the land in rain and mist as in a garment. Then it rains and rains until the land is flooded.

Here and there up along the hills and ridges creep small loops of low houses like groping beasts. In the heavy air they are half hidden away, swathed in peat smoke and sea mist as in a dream; locked and still they lie along the slopes like the homes of dwarfs. Round the houses pale green plots of fields and meadows show like islands in the moors; every fleck and every strip is shut away with walls like long stone piles.

In these homes live a folk, strong and stubborn, who dig their way through life with back-breaking toil, who busy themselves with the earth, and read the Scriptures, who force corn from the soil and hope from their dreams, who believe in Mammon and trust in God.



II

THE autumnal day lay cold and still over land and sea; evening was coming on. The sky was overcast now that the sun had disappeared behind a cloud bank in the west. Here and there lay long, motionless cloud streamers. The wind, which had blown all day, had now died down as it usually does toward night; it was so still that one could hear his own breathing.

As dusk came creeping on, blue and cold, the rush of rivers and brooks cut sharply through the air. High over the ridge two great black birds sailed slowly toward the west. Far off toward the northeast a curlew called with a neigh like that of a hell horse.

Enok Haave shuddered as he clattered down the Haaland hill in his cariole. That devil laughter in the stillness sounded so grisly. "Get on, Brunko." Best to drive on now; he was still a long way from home.

Enok was wrapped in deep thought and his sun-browned face looked haunted and wistful with its downcast eyes and the drawn lines about his mouth. When would he really do it? How long was he to go on, a slave of sin, and never gain peace? Truly he had never sold himself to Satan for life — as Lars Danielson said in the last meeting. But

nevertheless his period of life . . . "Thou fool, this night they shall require thy soul from thee." What would avail then the treasures he had laid up?

He had laid up few enough anyway; he was more probably losing what he had. Anna's inheritance was already eaten up by his new-broken land and still he hadn't more than half his seed planted. The earth was so meager and thin that it would be a long time before he got his money back, though as long as he had his silverware and gold rings — "One was never a beggar as long as there was silver in the house," his father used to say. But now Enok owed money here and there: to the storekeeper for goods, to Simon Ramstad for a cow, to Hans, his hired man, for the fishing; and then, too, his taxes rose and rose. . . . If he wanted to sell anything, he got little enough, but if he wanted to buy, everything was unreasonably dear. Times were so hard and pinched that he had almost lost heart. Meanwhile his children grew and grew, and they had to have shoes and new clothes.

The trouble was that there was no blessing on it. There was no use in anything when God was not with him. It was not worth while even in a worldly way to serve the Devil. No, no. If he could only persuade himself to be a child of God, then he would feel more secure even on earth. He would cast his sorrows upon the Lord, who watched over even the raven's young. And in the Book of Explanations it was written:

"Who are the most favored of the Lord?"

"His believing children."

And furthermore: "Is there any benefit in serving the Lord?"

"Yes, great benefit, for we know that everything works out for the good of those who love God and serve Him."

Think of being free of all care, of being protected against all fear, all disquietude. Never in his life had Enok had a wholly happy day. There was in him a kind of yearning that he himself hardly understood, a knot in his breast that was never loosed. He felt always as if he had done some evil — as if he had something to be afraid of. He never felt secure; he could never sit down in comfort — not even in his own house; even if he seemed to be gay in merry company or eager in heated discussion, remorse lay and gnawed within his breast; he was never glad through and through. He was driven from one thing to another without ceasing; everything new deadened the pain for a time, but only for a time; then again his anguish came upon him and he was just where he had been before. Well, what else could he expect? He who had not made his peace with God would have to feel that way. It was no wonder that he was fearful as long as each moment that passed led him nearer and nearer to the brink of hell.

The mare stopped so suddenly that he nearly fell forward; they had come to the hill and Brunko wanted him to get off. Enok climbed down and walked up the hill. He was a little above average height, broad-shouldered and well grown. He was a fine-looking man and carried himself well, but his head was always bowed as if beneath a burden and

his eyes were fixed on the ground moodily and thoughtfully.

It had been so terribly still, and now it was growing darker and darker. The whole world was empty and deserted now — not a sound and not a sign of life. There were only he and the brown mare in the middle of the black hills. "Ah, God be with us, when the night comes on and the daylight fails."

They had come up the hill, and he stopped and clambered up on the cariole. Hush, what was that? Whoa! He held back the horse and listened. Wasn't that just what he had been thinking — there was something uncanny. There was often something weird when everything was so still. "So now, get up, Brunko." He drove on, but he was ill at ease.

Through the deathly still air quivered a sound, a heavy, sullen thunder that filled the arch of the sky. It came from everywhere and nowhere, but especially from the northwest, from the barren, open spaces out there where the land ended and the sea began, rolling in straight from the fog banks by the northern ice. There was a metallic clangor in the air — a long, faint, ringing tone; the sea was boiling up from its farthest depths, and lashing itself up as if it were the Last Day. Its foundations were shaken in uproar and anguish, in dread of the coming wrath and the final doom when the seams of the world will be loosened and the earth sink in the sea and the heavens be rolled up like a scroll. It was the roar of the surf.

There must have been a great storm at sea last night, thought Enok to comfort himself, but he could not ease his disquiet. "The sun shall be swallowed

up; the moon shall be like blood . . . and the sea and its waves shall overwhelm. . . ." Think, if the Son of Man should come now; if the Heavens should be riven with crashing thunders and the great trumpet pierce through with its fearful peal so that the graves were opened and the dead stood up. . . .

"Hi there, get up, Brunko." He belabored the mare with the whip till he started her into a trot. He was just crawling along; here it was black night and he was still jolting over the road — and he had yet to cross Cemetery Hill.

Oh, well, Doomsday wasn't coming tonight. It was not yet 6,000 years after the Creation, and it was then that it should come, but nevertheless, anyone who didn't have God with him was always afraid. "Get up there."

A child of God was safe wherever he went. But he would have to turn over a new leaf; seriously now, he must and he would. He couldn't stand going on this way any longer; every day might be his last, and there was no telling if he would have time to ponder the matter any longer. Then, too, God would finally tire of anyone who stubbornly refused to acknowledge Him, and then he would be lost. Lost. It was such a terrible word that Enok trembled.

No, tomorrow morning, before his period of grace had ended! "Oh, God, take me not away in the midst of my sin. God, be merciful to me according to Thy great mercy."

The air was filled with thunderous reverberations; Enok sat hunched over in the cariole and shuddered. What if the Lord came anyway? Nobody knew the time and the hour, and there had

been wars and rumors of wars. And his sin was so great that God would soon be wearied of him. What if it should be too late tomorrow? "So there, Brunko. Oh, God, take me not away. . . . Oh, God, be patient with me." Weren't those distant thunders ever going to stop?

Now he was on Cemetery Hill, where he had never liked to be as late as this. It was a deserted place and far from people. Tramps or some evil thing might be on the road or lying watching him from up under the great stones. It was here that his father had seen dwarfs under a hill — all old legend and nonsense, but nevertheless there must have been something in it. No one knew what he might see. The Devil was strong, and when God wasn't with one . . . If only somebody would come along so that he might have company.

Below him the pond lay black and quiet, just beneath the brow of the hill. That was where the son of old Parson Juel had died. There were people who had said that they heard cries. . . . And in back of the great stones up there they had found Berta Aalvestad who had frozen to death. It always seemed to him that the corpse was still sitting up there.

What was Gunnar busy about this evening? Probably he would sit up till the latest possible moment, waiting for his father with presents from town. Well, he would have his presents in the morning when he got up. . . .

Didn't he hear something then? "Hi, get up, you."

In the morning there would be a celebration.

He'd have a cap and a new Catechism, and best of all, apples. And the girls would get some too. Think, three girls, one after the other. A boy came after Serina, but he had died. There was no blessing in that either, but, thank God, Gunnar had been hale and healthy. Now he was ten years old and would soon be of some use around the place. If he only didn't make an idol of the boy. Enok pondered the phrase: He who hates his rod loves his son. No, that was wrong. Well, he couldn't keep his thoughts from woolgathering. These earthly things that forever filled his head, there was no help in them. No-o-o. Without God, no peace. In the morning as soon as he had a moment. . . . The Lord would certainly wait till the morning. Thank God, a breeze had begun to stir, and it wouldn't seem so strange and uncanny when he was to pass the church. "Get up, Brunko."

He felt braver; there'd be no Doomsday tonight. Why should there be now rather than any other evening? He'd heard the sound of the surf often enough.

What was that? He shook so that he saw stars. On the hill by the church he had heard a noise. He held up the mare and listened; his heart hammered so in his breast that he heard it. Ah, thank God, it was a human being; he heard the rumble of wheels. He drew a deep breath and felt eased and gay. But who could it be? Was it someone drunk? He heard singing. He was afraid again; no one knew what a drunken man might try to do.

*"The cliff top that the fir tree bears
Offers solace for our cares."*

A man's voice sang, and his cariole came rumbling down upon Enok full tilt. It sheered a little out to one side and came on at the same speed.

"What the devil, is somebody there?" roared out a rough, high voice. It was Napolon Storbrekke.

Enok shuddered at the grisly swearing. Terrible to call on the Evil One at night. "So it's you who are out so late?" he said weakly.

"Aye, it's me," yelled Napolon; "a troll likes the dark best. Have you just come from town, Enok?"

"Yes, I've just come from there."

"Well, I'm just going in; now you tell me if there's anything stirring. There's nothing more than usual, I suppose?"

Enok reported while Napolon sat and swore. "What? So strike me dead! Well, that's that! What the devil do you think of that?" When Enok ended with the usual "Things are looking bad," Napolon roared out that he was going to America. He was determined on it. He was leaving his farm and the whole muddle and going hell-bent to America. There was no living here for decent folk. "That's what I said to the Sheriff at Aase, too. I dropped in one evening; he gave me a dram or two — he's a good fellow. Whoa there. That's what I said. Do you know what he answered? 'If people like you,' he said, 'go to America, who'll be left at home? We'd better try,' he said, 'to see if we can't ship out all the tramps, Napolon,' he said. But if they try that scheme, by God, everybody would turn tramp, says Napolon Salmonsens Storbrekke."

"I think that you ought not to swear so much,

Napolon," began Enok hesitatingly, but the other did not hear him.

"Whoa, stand still, you. Yes, it's just as I say. Stand still, you devil. Can you guess what I pay in taxes now? Guess, Enok. They're always talking of my miserable little fulling mill that I set up. If I didn't have it, I couldn't make a go of it. Five dollars, man. You don't believe that, but I'll wager you whatever you wish — five shining hard dollars, man, and then two skilling. You can see why I'm poor. I borrowed from the bank last year, and now I have the loan and interest to pay back, and if I don't pay on the dot, then the lawyers will be around. Aye, I hold with Torkjell Tutling — Torkjell Tualand, I should say — when it comes to that. We ought to get our guns and chase 'em all out — the whole crew. Either that or they'll eat us up alive, unless we do like Per Rudlevig. He gets along by stealing. Whoa! That's one solution, but it's not mine. Now you can go, you old crow bait. I can't make her stand. Good night, Enok." He rolled along.

"*'The cliff's top . . .'* Whoa! Enok?"

"Yes."

"You're going to the wedding at Helge's?"

"Ye-es, I suppose so."

"Well, we'll meet there then. Good night."

"*'The cliff's top that the fir tree bears . . .'*"

Enok clucked to his horse. See there; see there. The Devil was a wonder; he was always finding some new way to get at you. There was always something unexpected in his path. Now he couldn't turn over a new leaf until after the wedding.



III

THE lights had been lit along the great table in the house where the wedding was being held, for it was quite dark. By the lower end sat a group of the older men with clay pipes and beer mugs in comfortable gossip; farther up sat another group who were playing cards. But out in the living room the dancers swung to the squeaking of the fiddle with cries, uproar, and vast energy, so that the whole house re-echoed. Helge Haave was holding for his youngest daughter a wedding feast that could be both seen and heard.

The beer was strong and good, and there was enough brandy. Nils Ramstad was playing, and right now things were at their height. The whole neighborhood had been invited — kinsfolk and friends — and the house was in a turmoil with a happy throng that was bent on three carefree days.

Enok was the nearest neighbor, and he could not do anything else save come, but he was not at ease. He sat in the room with the older men and listened to the uproar and thought that he was in the temple of Satan. He seldom smiled, and his gray eyes were unhappy. He drank when anyone offered to drink with him and answered when he was spoken to, but for the most part he sat huddled to-

gether on his bench as if he were spellbound by his own thoughts.

It was ghastly to watch all these people rushing about and serving the Devil. In the very next instant they might be standing before the Bar of Judgment — and how would they feel then? Even the old people, who knew that they had but little time left, served Satan as though they were his liegemen, drank and swore and boasted, and gave never a thought to the time of their death. And there was so much of evil on their lips, a fearful blasphemy. One asked the Devil to take him; another yearned for a “death of torment.” Napolon Storbrekke sat among the card players and roared and swore so that the air was blue about him. And people merely laughed at him; the more he roared, the more they laughed, till even the little boys far up the table’s length were doubled up in laughter. There was no one who remembered what Scripture said about the millstone. Enok stared and stared, and at times was beside himself. It seemed to him that he was watching corpses or clothed skeletons that walked and danced. When they laughed and showed white rows of teeth, he shuddered. If they realized who sat behind them and sharpened his claws, they wouldn’t be laughing. And the young folk that flirted and danced and sang out there — what would happen to them if the Bridegroom came? But they gave it never a thought, even though some of them had just been confirmed. Yes, this was Satan’s house and the gate of hell; he would sit here only a spell so that he could say that he had been here, and then he would go home.

The fiddle sounded and resounded; there was a marvelous and devilish magic in its playing. He had to listen to it whether he wanted to or not. In a way it was pleasant, all too pleasant; at times he almost believed that it was good, but then the hand of the Devil showed: laughter and temptation, illusion and delusion—the power of Hell that drew the soul away out into the desert and far from God into sin and lust and everlasting repentance.

“No earthly power is of any use here,” roared Napolon Storbrekke from among the card players. “Here’s the King himself; come, bring me a drink.” Blasphemy and laughter. “Here’s to my thirsty throat; I know that it’ll like this.” Napolon drank and then got up and wandered about. “I’ve won so long that I’m tired of it,” he said. He was a little beside himself with the liquor: his little cold blue eyes like those of a bird of prey were fixed in a hard stare; his beaked nose glistened and all his sharp, big-boned face was red and hot. “It’s no fun to play with you,” he mocked; “it’s like playing with children. If there’s nobody better than you, by God, there’ll be no more playing for Napolon Storbrekke. How are things here?” he hailed the old men. “What do you think of the new generation? I’m damned if I’d get up for any of them even if I was sitting on a disc harrow. They can’t dance, and they can’t drink, and they can’t play cards, and they can’t fight. Can there be any life in a wedding party with people like these?” Thundering laughter.

Napolon was served with beer and sat down and began to boast. He told tales of the time when he had been a horse trader. One story followed an-

other wilder than the one before, most telling of how well he had cheated that meeching horse trader, Per Rudlevig. "I tell you, he earned everything that he got, and if I can beat him once more, I'll do it. Why shouldn't I cheat a scoundrel every time I get the chance? That's what I'll do; I don't care what you think."

"I think that you're a bit hard on Per Rudlevig," said Enok gravely. "I'm afraid that when you think it over, you'll find you have your faults just as he has his."

"By God, Enok, that's the truth. Skaal, my old friend and confirmation fellow! It's fine that you speak right out and say what you mean, but I say what I've said before, that Per Rudlevig putters about and steals, and I putter about and drink, and if he gets to Heaven, I'll be close behind him."

There was such a burst of laughter that Enok's grave reply could not be heard.

He wondered if he could not go now. Here he sat in the company of sinners and in the seat of the scornful, drank with the ungodly, and listened to evil communications. If he were called that night, he would be ill prepared. He felt besmirched by the sin around him. To hear and look on such things and not stop them was to make oneself a participant in the sins of others.

"Here now, you must try the beer, Enok; I think you'll find it good."

It was Helge himself who was speaking, the father of the bride. He was a little drunken, but not much more than was reasonable under the circumstances. He sat down beside Enok and began

to chat with him. "Today I'm marrying off the last of my daughters, so I'll never invite you to a wedding again," he said, "and we've always been good neighbors, so you must do well by me this time. What's more, you have known Berta Maria, the bride, since she was a little girl. I drink to you, Enok, and you must empty your glass. You're not sitting here like this because you're angry about something, are you?"

"No, no," broke in Enok. He drank. It was crazy of him to act this way; he was being pretty unsociable. When he was out in company, he ought to act like the rest. People might be offended if he sat here like one worried. Helge was a good, kindly man whom Enok liked well; he had always been helpful and steadfast. If he felt glad today and wanted to see others glad about him that was only his right.

"Finish your glass now," said Helge, "and let them fill it up again. It always tastes better when it's just from the barrel."

The two neighbors sat and held council together. Enok had to show that he was not angry; he followed Helge's lead in talk and dram, and then the bridegroom came up with bottle and glass and poured out a drink.

"You must drink with me now, Enok, on my great day. You must remember that I went to school to you. You have been sitting here and not drinking, but now you must do us the honor to taste our wares, the little that we have. I drink to you. Skaal, Enok."

There was nothing else to do. Enok drank. But

he had to take more than one. The bridegroom was very pleasant and kindly, and one dram more or less made little difference; one could always stand one more drink. He talked to the groom for a little while about old days and then turned back to Helge. "He's a fine chap that your daughter is getting," said Enok.

"Oh, yes, I think he's not so bad," said Helge. "And his farm is good enough, so that he'll get along."

Suddenly it seemed to Enok that his heavy thoughts had left him. He looked about with clearer eyes. Things weren't so bad as he had thought. He could not make any new resolutions tonight anyway, so he might as well stay on. The good Lord could certainly have nothing against him for sitting here and gossiping with his friends, provided that he neither swore nor did anything else that he shouldn't. He realized that he really couldn't do much else except what he was doing, and one sin more or less didn't matter so long as one had not as yet been converted. Beer was a gift of God, and Helge was a pleasant man. If he only acted in a decent manner. . . .

Slowly his eyes grew brighter and his pale, clear forehead flushed. Anna came to the door and peered in once or twice, and was pleased to see her husband acting like the rest; he had been so strange lately that she had hardly known what to think.

Enok Haave was a man of about forty years — handsome, with a clear, wise, big-featured face, that seemed kindly and almost childish when he laughed. He had a habit of holding his chin in his hand. His

hair was so black that it had an almost bluish sheen; a single lock hung down over his forehead. From beneath his ears and down around his throat grew a thick, brownish-red beard which with the black hair lay like a frame about the grave, open face. He had on a short, tight jacket of some blue stuff, and a shiny black vest of English cloth; about his neck was bound a strip of black silk in a neat knot that set off the ironed white shirt and collar. With his stern, dark head set fast on his broad shoulders he looked quite different from the others — almost like an alien. There were a good many who thought that there was something aloof and chill about him.

Queer what a dram would do! He felt warmed and well; no longer did he feel even a touch of anxiety. One drink wasn't bad; it was only several together that...

It was strange too, that everything that was wrong should be so dear to flesh and blood: good company, and good liquor, and the sound of a fiddle, and noise and talk. The lust of the eyes, the desires of the flesh, and riotous living — that's what the old Adam wanted.

Napoleon was so drunken that he began to sing:

*"Can it be that the whole land
Would better be, with whiskey banned?
No.
So fill the glasses."*

Poor Napoleon! He always acted like this after too much whiskey.

The fiddle was what worried him most. It had

a tone and a sound that struck strangely to the heart, an undertone, a harmony that could not come from the strings alone. Was that the Devil? They were not really joyous, these undertones, either; one would rather call them sorrowful; there was a magical blending of gladness and tears, tender and winning. And with it came so many memories of things that he would rather have forgotten — all his youth. If somebody merely picked at the strings, wild old things welled up — delusions and fanciful dreams of the days of his youth. In those days he himself had danced and fought and followed the girls. He remembered well the wedding at Ramstad where she was, the one they had teased him about for a time . . . none the less a fine lass. Nothing but poverty there, so he couldn't think seriously of—but she was a joyous, wholesome girl. They had danced and flirted and stolen away to the hay-barn . . . oh, youth's foolishness and thoughtlessness. Well, that was nothing to think about now; it was over and forgotten, as it should be; it was only that fiddle. "He's a good one to play, that Nils."

"He is that. He's a clever one at it, that he is."

The old days were so fair. He remembered now that there were more times then than there were in these days when the sun shone fiercely, when the afternoons were long and blue, and the hill-sides mellow with heat. The air had smelled of flowers and hay, and the lapwing screamed and the starfinch pecked and the partridge scratched in the meadows, when they used to meet in the cool evening hours. Stuff and nonsense and shocking sin, but still a kind of sadness hung about it.

Now Nils was striking up the old rustic dance — the very one that Enok and Kjistina had danced at Ramstad twenty years ago. Enok got up and went out “to get some fresh air into his lungs.” He halted first in the hallway and watched the dance and then went out on the porch. Here he stood and listened to the fiddle for a long while.

Was there really so much sin in the fiddle, now? How Nils was playing! The music sounded and resounded through the whole house, and they danced and thumped as if they were on a threshing floor. The men had already shed their coats, and the girls were so warm and red that their faces glistened. Foolishness! Devil’s work! Dancing on the brink. . . .

People went out and in; waves of laughter and song and movement wherever he turned. A young sailor from the town had a new song which they were all learning. It was about a maiden in England who was so amazingly rich that —

*“Her income by the year
600,000 was. . . .”*

Then there came a sailor who wooed her, and she had no more sense than to want to have him, but her father was of another mind, as was reasonable enough, and so there was trouble. Then the sailor got up courage to talk straight out to the rich old man: it was wrong to believe only in wealth and gold; he would always have enough for his needs, and earthly goods were nothing certain to depend upon; he would have no help from them in the end —

*"For when you draw your latest breath
In blackest mould you will be laid."*

Terrible that they could stand and sing such stuff. Hadn't they any thought of the future?

Just then he swayed to one side; he had to grip a post and hold fast to keep himself from falling down the stone steps. He was so startled that his head cleared immediately. He had been drunk.

Fear seized upon him. Away, away from this house of sin! He strode off west with a resolute step through the back lanes toward home, did not even pause to go in after his hat.

This was the world and its lusts: drunkards and adulterers shrieking and staggering down the way to hell; the Devil danced about them and laughed. The fiddle kept time; their wild cries rose to Heaven. Save yourself; save yourself before it is too late. "God, take me not away in the midst of my sin."

He slipped into the house by the back door, struck a light, and got into bed. When Anna came home, he lay asleep, pale and sweaty, with "The Spiritual Chain of Prayer" between his hands.



IV

NO, when the Devil had once got hold of you, you couldn't shake him — Enok couldn't do anything about his reform today either. It was the time for the newly married couple to visit all the neighboring farms, and Enok had to receive them. If he tried to keep away from sin, sin came to him. And today it was worse than usual, for he had to be the host of the Devil — sin himself and lead others into sin; he had enough to do without thinking of his soul. The Lord would have to wait until tomorrow as usual. Excuses and excuses — always tomorrow, never today; the Lord last and everything else first.

Could he refuse to conform to the custom? Enok sat in his underwear on the edge of his bed and stared at his sock for five minutes. Break the custom? No, he couldn't do that; people wouldn't take it right; they would think he did it out of pure meanness, that he went to the wedding and had a good time himself but slipped out from under when it was his turn to stand treat. They'd say he got religious right after the wedding to save the price of a meal. No, he saw how it was; he'd have to do his part.

He screwed up his mouth determinedly, drew on his socks and trousers, pushed aside his conscience, and let the matter take its course. Anna had never seen him so queer as he was that morning.

It was a bad day. At the house where the wedding had been held, people had their first drinks, and then with the fiddler in the lead, they marched over to Enok's and then to Per's, drank and drank till they were fuddled, and then went back again to the bride's house. When finally they had gone the rounds, most of them were so full that they were singing.

There was a wordless and disorderly stir and babel of voices; people rushed around in a kind of nightmare, yelled and screeched, hummed and sang. Every one sang songs to tunes of his own so that there was a wild uproar, cut through by the shrieks of women and the laughter of girls. Anyone who had to say anything screamed at the top of his lungs. In the living room the dance went on with a heavy pounding and tramping so that the floor shook and the house trembled. Some beat time, and the fiddle whined but was hardly heard. The fiddler was so drunk that he did little more than nod.

All the doors stood wide open and through the rooms streamed misty exhalations of perspiration and burning tobacco. The tallow candles in their sockets on the tables and in the old brass sconces on the walls glimmered as if they slept. Everything was swept together in the dusk of a dream. People streamed out and in, reeled and staggered, waved threatening hands; old enemies embraced and old friends squared off and fought. Laughter and cries and harsh words pierced through the hubbub. It was a wedding, fit time for a celebration; every one was blithe and wild; his sorrows were cast aside and momentarily forgotten. For a day they were all free.

In the middle of the yard Napolon Storbrekke lay flat on his stomach and vomited.

Enok and Anna went home as soon as they had drunk the health of the new couple. It would have been unwise to have refused to drink on a day like this, but Enok was ill at ease in body and conscience. Now, thank God, it was finished.

If God would now only grant him the proper feelings of remorse. He'd tried all evening but without success. The Devil all the time had been whispering to him that he was no worse than the others; yes, even that he was better than some of them. That was just the trouble. As long as he wasn't the worst of sinners, but tried to measure himself against others and find excuses for himself and even things to his advantage, so long was he unrepentant and so long was the way to Grace closed to him.

He sighed so heavily that Anna started and was about to ask him what the matter was, but she restrained herself — it was nothing that she could help him with, she was afraid.

There were no more weddings for a time, but Enok's depression continued. Several days later they were sitting about the table after an early supper of stewed fish. Hans, the hired boy, and Marta, the servant girl, had chattered away for a time, and Anna had done her part; there was plenty to gossip about so soon after a wedding. Such and such a one had been drunk; Napolon Storbrekke had been found the third day in the calf stall in Enok's barn; such and such a one had quarreled with another; such and such a lad had seemed to hang about a certain girl so that they could soon expect a wedding — "or

at least a christening." But no matter what they discussed, Enok sat as silent as if he were deaf. One after another the rest had fallen silent.

Outside, the wind blew in fitful gusts; the sky was gray with the threat of winter. The trees in the clump by the road stood gaunt and bare, their wind-tossed branches creaking. There were no birds save for a magpie here and there or a flapping crow.

They heard the clatter of wooden shoes in the hallway and then the door opened slowly and silently. Per, their neighbor from the farm north of them, entered. "Bless the food," he said softly and sat down.

He was a red-haired, mild little man with small eyes and small features. He punctiliously removed a sou'wester from his head with an air of importance. He looked as though he had portentous tidings, even though as an excuse for the visit he carried a couple of newspapers under his arm.

When they had greeted one another with the usual talk of weather and crops, Per gave them the papers with proper apologies for not bringing them before. Then there was a pause. Per sat sighing; the rest waited. It looked as if they were going to hear news.

"You've perhaps heard nothing about the accident that happened today?" said he finally.

"Has something happened — here in the parish?"

"Yes, God defend us, that there has, and no farther away than at Storbrekke."

"God help us," sighed Enok. He felt a sudden

chill go through him. "Why, what's the matter there? Is somebody sick?"

"Yes," groaned Per; "it's much worse. Napolon, he's p —— It's hard to talk about."

"What?"

"You remember that he was pretty wild that day of the wedding?"

"Yes."

"Well, now he's — passed on."

It seemed as if a shadow slipped through the room.

"Dear Lord Jesus! Napolon?"

"Yes, he was taken away by a violent death today at half past ten."

"Blessed Jesus! What's that you're saying?"

They sat stiff and silent with white faces and frightened eyes; the news so startled them that they could hardly breathe.

"Is it really true? How could it have happened?"

"Yes, it's true enough. I don't know just how things stood, but I have a feeling that Napolon was hardly prepared to die. I have never heard anything that hit me so hard as this has."

"How did it happen?"

"Oh, it was sudden enough. Lars, my hired man, has just come from there. He had been up with some potatoes that I had borrowed from Napolon last spring — and they were laying out the body as he got there."

It grew darker outside; a rising wind whined down the chimney and buffeted the doors; they shivered and huddled together.

"Lord, teach us so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," Enok muttered; his face was drawn and gray.

"Was it an accident?" asked Hans. "Did he fall or ——?"

"No, not at all. It was just a fit that came over him, and very suddenly too. He apparently felt rather poorly after the wedding, but today he had decided that he was going to the doctor, or there was something else, we don't know. Anyway, he was going to take his hired man with him and shoe the mare. And as they were trying to harness her — she was feeling lively and wouldn't stand still — he keeled over flat without a word. There was a rattling in his throat, but he died at once, and never moved. When they tried to find out what the matter was, there was nothing more to do."

"In Christ's name."

"So fearfully quick!"

"It can't be true."

Another moment of silence settled upon the room. Little Gunnar clung to his father and wept with fear. Serina hid her face in her mother's lap.

"God defend us from a violent, unforeseen and sudden death," Enok prayed. "Lord, rebuke us not in Thy wrath, neither chasten us in Thy hot displeasure."

A long-drawn sigh answered him.

Per sat bent forward with his elbows on his knees and his hands clasped. "There must be One above who has a reason for this," he said, "but just the same it is a heavy burden to bear."

"The meaning is plain enough," said Enok.

"He makes use of anguish, and good deeds, and the examples of others to recall mankind to themselves. We should ponder this call from on high; we know not when the hour may strike for any one of us."

"True enough," they murmured in the cold, gray evening light.

The wind outside rose and fell, howled down the chimneys and wrenched at the doors. The darkness grew tighter, the world closed down upon them. Death waited at every turning; no one could know whom next He would take away. Perhaps soon there might be a body here to lay out. "I'm afraid, Father," whimpered Gunnar.

"Tonight I wouldn't go out to the stable alone if I had to die for it," said Marta, shuddering.



V

ENOK went straight out to the stable where he crept up into the brown mare's stall, and knelt and prayed. God had spoken out at last; he'd have to do something. He had lately knocked too feebly and too half-heartedly on the Doors of Grace. He'd have to use force and push himself through before they were locked — he himself had been drunken at the wedding.

He prayed for regret, the true, right sense of remorse, begged and implored. He was a sinner, but he felt only fear of God's judgment, and that alone was of little help. Judas had also been afraid; the Devil himself was afraid. Remorse, remorse was what must awaken within him — the deep heart sorrow at having offended God. "Oh, God, shape a new heart in me."

He probed and delved into his past life for the sins there; he tried his life by the Ten Commandments — and found that he had broken them all. And that not once or seven times, but nearly every hour and minute, during his whole life, through stubbornness or weakness, in thought and deed.

Was there a worse idolater than he? Idols he had had, more numerous than he could remember or reckon up. But him that he above all had worshipped was Mammon. On the land he had set his heart, on

his own land; his farm had been everything to him, his love and his constant thought. Beyond it he knew neither pleasure nor pain; beside it he had no desire for anything on earth. He had dreamed of it in his youth; when he had turned school-teacher, it had not been because he had wanted to teach youth the Word of God, but because he thought only of the twenty dollars a year which would help him to work the farm. Sometimes he had traded in sheep and made money with lies and evasions — the sin against the Seventh Commandment. And then when time had dragged before he could take over the farm, hadn't he, God help him, nearly wished the health from his father — on account of his love for the land? Since then he had broken ground, and striven and built and toiled, and had no thoughts save for Mammon. Then when little Gunnar came, he had found himself caught by a new idolatry that had bound his heart even faster to earth; he had held aloof from the true God as if He had been something evil.

Ah, how often he had taken God's name in vain, broken the Sabbath, angered his father and mother, thought evil of his neighbor. When it came to the Sixth Commandment, what could he say? How could he defend himself? He hadn't been much more than a boy when he had fallen into loose talk and loose company; it was not pleasant to think about nor any matter for pride. He had loved sin and sought sin until his parents became aware of what was going on and had turned the woman out of the house. And there had been the other one who had been his idol, on whom he had thought day and night; and many others whom in the years of his youth he had

looked upon to lust after. Those sins had been recorded. A great slough of uncleanness lay across those years. What a sinner he was — not a clean spot on him from head to foot. Still he had no regret; went about dreading only the eternal punishment that he had earned. "Oh, God, be merciful to me! Oh, God, be merciful to me!"

But for all he prayed, he had no answer, no feeling that God had heard him. Had he perhaps continued and continued on his course for so long now that God no longer cared about him? No, no; he must have help.

He tried to think of God's love. He reckoned up all the good he had received from God: life, health, food and drink, wit and understanding — all that he needed for his soul and body — and that despite the fact that he had thought only of wicked things. Every hour had he deserved hell, but God had spared him — spared him and upheld him, watched over him and protected him. Yes, He had even sent His only begotten Son so that there might be salvation for him when he should at last come to himself. He had let him be born in a Christian land where the way to His Throne of Mercy had been open and free, and He had given him of His gifts and stood waiting for him with outstretched arms for forty years, loving and patient despite his wrongdoing and his evil deeds. He thought of all these things till he felt like a dog and a scoundrel, but no tears came for his sins.

He went in, turned up the light, and began to read in Lars Linderöth. Perhaps he could find a strong word that would break asunder his hard heart.

Then he took up Johan Arndt, and finally the Bible. When it drew near his bedtime, he recited his prayers, the good old prayers from the hymn book of his father. But he had to lie down without a sign of grace.

He lay and shivered in dread of death and hell and could not sleep — dared not sleep. What if God came? He prayed, almost wept in his anguish, but received no sign that would show that his prayers had been heard. Anna lay and listened to him for a long time and shuddered.

Toward morning he fell into a restless sleep. He dreamed that he was walking down a road in rain-dark weather; the air was dank and heavy, and his bosom full of woe. Then he saw a man come down over a hill. The man had on a dogskin cap; his face was swollen and red. He stood staring at Enok, and opened his mouth as if to speak, but only shrieks and gibbering came forth. Then he grew sick and fell over. He stretched out and vomited, but what he sent forth was only molten fire. Enok grew stiff with terror; now he understood who it was.

He trembled in the throes of such dreams till he got up. He dressed in a trance and then wandered around the house and in and out as if he couldn't make up his mind to go to work. Anna had to speak to him at last. "Wasn't it today that you were going up to the mill with grain?"

After a long time he got under way, leaving Anna behind with a heavy heart. God help and comfort us, she thought, if Enok gets lost in one of his moods.

Haave Farm lay near the top of a long ridge

that rose like a smooth, round billow from the flat lands to the west and south. Three men lived on the farm in low, one-storied houses. Enok lived farthest to the west; his house was new and smeared with tar. The country road went almost beneath his window, and on the other side of it, opposite his window, was his "garden," some old trees, mostly mountain ash, and an enormous willow, which took the brunt of the northwest wind.

Down along the great slope southwards lay meadows, fields, grass plots, and beautiful pastures divided one from another by stone walls. The meadows stretched to the river and the peat marshes. South from them rose up the Ramstad hills, broad and black, stretching as far as the eye could see. From the heights of the hills to the east came the Skar River boiling down with foam-crested eddies, and drove the grist mill and the fulling mill, and then bent round in a quieter curve through the marshes up under the meadows of Haave Farm. Then it followed the curve of the hill in a great swing with a strong enough current so that the men at Haave could have water for their mills. Enok had his grist mill far north by the edge of his fields near the end of a dam that must have taken a whole summer to build.

There he spent the day, drying the corn and grinding it. It was wretched weather; a hard, heavy rain fell that was blended with sleet. The mill lay lonely and desolate. On the moors round about were small round hummocks; farther down and to the north lay the Heialand marshes and the lake with its bubbling springs. A little below it lay Heialand

Farm, old and gray, and looked as though it were creeping into the ground beneath its long turf roof. In old times there were tales of a ghost there, of a man who had hanged himself. Besides these there was nothing to see save hills and marshes, marshes and hills, and here and there the peak of a house sticking up from behind a hill as if it were trying to hide. In the east and north, however, through the rain clouds one could see Aase Farm and the cold, white church.

Evening drew on. The sky and the air grew hard and steel gray; purplish clouds drove out to the sea in the west. The roar of the river filled the air. Enok felt weary; thoughts of Napolon had occupied him all day. He prayed and prayed but without avail. His prayers were always being cleft asunder by intruding thoughts. Now Napolon lay burning in hell; perhaps he would beg Abraham to let him go home once again to warn his neighbors. What if he came? They were so indifferent and so smug that they needed something of the sort. It was not according to the Scriptures for him to come, but what if he came nevertheless? Suppose he stood there in the doorway?

Enok locked himself in, struck a light in a lantern, and tried to give himself over to God. "Ah, if only You would be with me, then there'd be no danger."

It was a large grist mill with two rooms. In the inner room was the drying pan and in the outer the stones. Enok stayed in the inner room. Every time that he had to go into the mill room with its

cold, white walls and its queer shadows where the lights flickered, his heart hammered. Suppose somebody were sitting on the edge of the meal chest?

Outside he heard footsteps quite clearly. Who could it be? He waited and waited, but nobody came. Probably nobody was there at all. "Dear Lord God, be with me now; protect me against all evil." No, it was still going with distinct and heavy tread. He did not dare look out, but he took his lantern and flashed it on the outer door. No, there was no one there; only the roar of the river that rose against him like a warning, gruesome cry. He slammed the door and shut himself in again. The footsteps came and went outside.

There was nothing there! He winnowed grain for all he was worth, shut his ears to all sounds. "He whom God protects is without danger." Was it perchance the Devil who was waiting for him? Perhaps the Evil One was afraid that Enok would wrench himself free, and he was going to seize him now while there was yet time.

The drying pan creaked and cracked with a slow persistence; it sounded as if it were groaning to itself. "Aah, oi; aah, oi," it said. What was the matter with the stones? They were rasping and squeaking as if there were no grain between them; he'd have to see to them. No, it was nothing; perhaps though he could put in a little more grain; they'd take care of it. The meal chest began to fill and he had to scoop a little out. "Aah, oi; aah, oi." It was strange how much he could hear when he was alone. There came the footsteps again. Well, he wouldn't

listen to them. If it was somebody, he would come in, and if it was something else, it was powerless against him. "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come —"

Then the stones cut through all other noises and the roar of the river with their granite voice. "In the pit of hell, in the pit of hell." He heard it clearly. The drying pan behind him groaned and groaned, ceaselessly and low, "Aah, oi; aah, oi." "In the pit of hell, in the pit of hell." "Aah, oi; aah, oi." "In the pit of hell, in the pit of hell." "Aah, oi; in the pit of hell; aah, oi." Terror seized upon him; a cold sweat broke out over him and involuntarily he grabbed a sluice board and stopped the wheel. Then it was terribly still — as if someone just dead lay out there. He shut himself in the inner room and locked the door. Fearfully still! There was a corpse in there, and here lay its soul in the red flame and writhed, "Aah, oi; aah, oi." He could stand it no longer. He closed up the pan, sacked the grain in trembling haste, put out the lantern, locked the door, didn't come to himself until he saw his home meadows.

Then without warning he felt such a wonderful longing for God — a longing such as a child feels for his father when he has been out alone and lost his way. When the darkness comes, he gives up and only cries. So for Enok all the world seemed dark and terrible, and his soul cried aloud after God, after his Father above in Heaven. He knelt by a fence and prayed. "I am so sad because I can't come to You. Dear Lord, open up Your doors to me so that I can slip in and gain peace — and forgiveness

for all my sins. Dear Lord, be patient with me and let me come in, Dear Lord Jesus." He felt more at ease and went on home, but he had received no answer from God.



VI

IT was the day on which they were going to bury Napolon. The weather was lowering and heavy, chill with winter, but nevertheless people came from all sides to the funeral. Napolon had been widely known, and they all thought that they must see him for the last time. Perhaps they wanted to be sure that he had really left. He had weighed like a horror over the whole neighborhood these last days; and they would feel a sense of relief to know that he was safely in the churchyard.

Enok had not intended to go; he was afraid that he would be too deeply affected. Then, too, he thought that to join in the funeral ceremonies of an unbeliever was a horrible thing. Nevertheless, when the time for the funeral came, he was there. He thought that it might be right for him to go and see how a man looked after he had gone to hell, for now Enok knew that that was where he himself was going.

God would have no more to do with him; prayer and hope were of no avail. No help came, and none would come. What else could he expect, he who had sinned against the Holy Ghost — “the sin of death”? It had suddenly occurred to him one day that there could no longer be any doubt. Anna had asked him if they shouldn’t go to Communion soon.

"Perhaps it would make you feel better," she said, kindly enough. He shuddered — go to Communion when he hadn't been converted? Eat and drink to one's own damnation? How could anyone ask such a thing? He had said No so sternly and so shortly that Anna had only looked sharply at him and said nothing further. And in that instant something in him said clearly, "That's just what you have done, Enok, many, many times."

He had stiffened in his tracks; his ears rang with the phrase, "to eat and drink damnation to himself; to eat and drink damnation to himself."

Since that moment Enok had gone about in a trance, but neither in the Bible nor in any other book could he find any answer to his question, though in the hymn book was the line about those who unworthily had partaken of God's body:

*"He is guilty of Christ's death;
His blood is on his head."*

So there was no doubt, no doubt at all.

He went about half sick, was seized with chills and fevers, with fits of dizziness. One evening when he was standing in the cellar and brooding over his sin, he had heard, as clearly as if the words were spoken beside him, the sentence: "This is the sin against the Holy Ghost."

Well, now he would see Napolon Storbrekke. He made his decision at the last minute, changed his clothes, and rode off the farm. Anna did not know what to think, but she hoped that it would do him good to mingle with people.

He came to the funeral late; they had already

taken away the food from the table; only the sexton, who had just come, was still eating. Old Solomon, father of the corpse, came up to him and bade him welcome. He showed no signs of grief. Poor old fellow, even this occasion could not awaken him.

The living room was quiet, still as a church; everybody's head was bowed in heavy thoughts, though here and there somebody sighed. The house was filled with a heavy, sickening odor — the smell of food, the scent of death, the acrid odor of burned resin. The mirrors and everything that would reflect light were, as usual, covered with white cloths, and over the cloths were wreaths of autumn leaves. The clock had been stopped. Napolon's wife sat with several women in a little chamber off the main room from which Enok could hear a muffled weeping. He had taken a place by the lower end of the table and sat there with his head bowed in his hands, staring into space. When they wanted to give him food, he refused. He did not want any food. Perhaps he was sick? they asked. "No." "No? Well, you're looking poorly, Enok."

The sexton had finished, and a man came in with two wooden horses that he set out on the floor a little apart from one another, and spread over them a sheet. Enok felt oppressed and afraid; his ears rang and little black specks wavered before his eyes. He heard a muffled sound outside and then a heavy, irregular tread. Now they were coming in with it. Six men brought in the long, black coffin and set it upon the horses. The lid was removed, and a woman pulled back the napkin from face and hands. Several people got up and edged over toward the

casket. They murmured and sighed, but Enok did not dare raise his gaze.

Was that the smell of brimstone? He felt dizzy; he thought that maybe flames might be coming up around the body, little golden tongues about the face and hair. Before he knew it, his eyes were resting on the coffin. There lay Napolon.

He looked like any other corpse — gaunt, hollow-faced, and strangely long. His wrists seemed as thin as pipe stems; his face was flecked with blue spots; his nose seemed larger than ever, but still firm. The face showed neither fear nor peace — nothing. Emptied of all emotion, without thought, it lay there as if nothing had happened. Enok raised himself to get a better look, but just then the napkins were drawn up and the lid was set on. It was good that the dead could not cry out.

The strokes of the hammer rang through the house with a dull, heavy echo. Two candles were set upon the coffin. The sexton, a young, erect man in riding boots and long overcoat, took his place by the head of the body with his hat in one hand and his hymn book in the other. He was solemn and ceremonious. "In the name of our Lord . . ."

Then came the well-known hymn from All Saints' Day, that was so often used at funerals, it was so beautiful. The song was wonderful; sorrowful and haunting, but mild — trustfully and confidently seeking God in prayer, full of a gentle certainty.

*"Oh, loving soul, feel thou no fear
If the whole world seems dark and drear*

*And God's great day of judgment looms
For sinners. . . ."*

The wind blew great gusts of rain and hail against the window-panes. The skies grew darker; the lights on the coffin lid burned red and low in the half dusk.

*"I'd tremble not e'en though I saw
The whole world to destruction draw,
And Heaven's lightnings play.
If plagues and fire on sea and land
Beset mankind on every hand,
For me would Jesus pray,
And guide me on my way."*

Slowly and solemnly the hymn drew to an end in a high, clear melody, and each stanza seemed milder and more beautiful and more filled with hope, till they all surged together in a dream of Heaven.

*"My soul is filled with yearning sore,
And longeth every day the more
For Thy sweet kingdom, Lord,
Where all the Saints are praising Thee
With harp and voice most joyously.
Oh, soon to me accord
Thy face to see, O Lord!"*

Someone groaned at one end of the table. People looked curiously at Enok; he was very pale, and his black hair hung damp with sweat over his forehead.

The candles were removed, and six men took up the casket. The sexton put on his hat and strode

out through the door singing. The casket was carried next, and the funeral train came after it. Enok sat still and hid his face in his hands till they had all gone. The gentle thoughts of Heaven and the prayers full of hope had struck to his heart and made him weep.

Out along the hillside straggled the funeral train through the heavy air, led by the sexton on his bay horse. His piercing tenor was carried on the wind out over the marshes and the hills.

Then it began to pour.

It was the same evening. The wind surged against the eaves in waves like billows against the bow of a ship. The walls creaked, and the roof groaned.

"Now winter has started," said Anna. They had all come in from the stable and had set away the milk pans and cleaned up for the night. Now they were sitting by the oil lamp, which flickered and wavered as if it were going out.

"It's good to be on land on a night like this," said Marta.

"Yes, it would be terrible to have anyone on the sea tonight."

Serina, a fair, pretty little girl of eight years, sat on a foot-stool by her mother and carded. Anna and Rakel, the two youngest, lay on the floor and busied themselves with some game of their own, while Gunnar sat beneath the lamp and worked over something that was going to be a seat in a wagon.

"There comes Father," he said.

"Yes, that's him," said Anna in a relieved tone. "He's a little late. Go out and see if the porridge is done."

"I'll do it," said Marta.

"And tell me when the potatoes are cooked."

"Yes." Marta pushed away the spinning wheel and went out into the kitchen.

The little girls followed her; lately they had been rather afraid of their father. Poor Enok, thought Anna. God grant that he had talked to the parson today. If he continued in this way, he might go crazy.

The outside door opened, and windows rattled and doors banged over the whole house. Enok came in slowly, but quietly. Thank God, she thought; he must have talked with the parson. "Well, you stayed a long time," she said.

He answered briefly, went over by the table and sat down. "It's terrible weather," ventured Anna.

"It's the wrath of God," he said. Then he sat silent and brooding, wrapped in heavy thought. God help me, thought Anna; he was all right a minute ago. Shall I say something? Before she had made up her mind, he got up and began to undress. It was plain that he was going to bed, and Anna was relieved; it was a good sign. If he could only sleep now!

"Turn away Thy wrath, oh, God, in Thy mercy," he began so that she was aghast. Then he clambered up into the bed and, as usual when he wanted to sleep, pulled the quilt up over his head. She heard him sigh and groan heavily. She went over to him and asked if there was anything the matter, asked a second time more loudly. "Nothing

with my body," he mumbled from under the quilt. She sat down again and he grew still.

Marta came in to say that the potatoes were cooked, and Anna had to go out into the kitchen. She took Gunnar with her; he was so clever at peeling.

Enok lay writhing under the quilt with the agony in his soul. He'd spoken with the parson and the talk had helped for a while, but on his way home his doubts had risen again. "He is guilty of Christ's death. His blood is on his head." There had been something about this sin that the parson hadn't explained. The phrase, "It shall not be forgiven him, either in this world, or in the world to come," that was a saying which must have a clear and definite meaning. The parson had explained it away after a fashion, but what wisdom could you expect from a man who was learned enough but did not speak from inspiration.

His agony came in throes so hard that he sweated. Let him who could flee, hide himself. "Mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb." But God was everywhere; wherever one went, there was God; every way was closed by God. If he fared as still as thought to the ends of the earth, God would be there; yea, even if he fled the world, if he made his bed in the farthest reaches of hell, God would be there, God would be there. There was no way of escape, no single spot of refuge. Napoleon lay no tighter in his coffin than Enok here in his bed. He turned and heaved to and fro, and thought sometimes that he would faint.

In his great need he called to God. Could there be no salvation for him? Would not Jesus take pity

on him and intercede for him? He wouldn't ask to come to Heaven itself; he expected no place among the blessed saints. If only he could have a place near the door, hide himself away in some corner, he would be content. If only God would take away his blood guilt, relieve him of his burden of sin, give him peace in his soul and mind, then He could do what He would with him. He would be content with anything. "Help me, help me; let me not go under. Save me, Lord; I fail."

A strange thing happened to him. He knew not if he were still in the body or out of the body, but he was awake and he saw....

The heavens were black as pitch. Far below him roared the sea. Great sailing ships were cast ashore and crushed to bits. Leviathan heaved himself up like a great whale; his eyes shot forth fire, and his throat belched smoke. And a voice outside of the world and behind the world cried, "It is finished."

Then a great, wide tongue of fire rose from the northern heavens. The sea boiled up in yellow foam with the noise of many thunders. He was afraid and turned away; and then flames burst out in the eastern heavens and on the mountains. Vaadalskula burned; Skarefjell burned; mountain after mountain caught fire and flew to flinders, and out of the great cracks and bottomless pits roared huge golden flames. Once again he turned away and saw with a witless terror that smoke rose from the sea, a heavy, close smoke like that which rises from green heather when it burns. Then it all burst into one gigantic flame that spread to the sky like an unfurled sail. And in that

instant the heavens were riven; the earth vanished from beneath his feet, and the flames rushed together from all sides.

He sank down in gibbering terror and gave a long, long shriek. Through the sea of fire the Devil came swimming like a brown whale and opened wide his jaws. Then Enok found the power to call upon Jesus, and in that instant he felt the grasp of a hand. It was like any other hand save that in the palm was a hollow such as might be left by a nail.

Out in the kitchen Anna heard a cry so terrible that her heart stopped and her knees grew so weak that she sank down. The cry rang out again; she got up and stumbled into the room. He still lay beneath the quilt and groaned. He must have had a fearful dream, but now it had passed over. She stood by the bed stiff with fright, but she could not open her mouth. She listened for a while until she was sure that he had quieted down and then went back to the kitchen. Marta and the children were pressed close to the door in a frightened group.

"Is Father sick?" asked Gunnar.

"Nothing serious, I hope."

They went back to the kitchen but let the door stand ajar. Anna was seized with a fit of trembling and had to sit down.

Enok lay alone and found that he had the power to pray. He prayed in a different way from ever before, and he was filled with a hope that was stronger than all the Devil's power, for now he had seen the Stigmata of the Lord.

At last God had taken pity on him; now at last he had had an answer — a sign so certain that

he no longer dared doubt. An eternal sense of peace stirred in his breast; his whole soul burned with prayer; his whole being flamed into prayer; sin and anguish, doubt and despair burned and were consumed in that stream of fire. He no longer prayed in words; he prayed wordlessly from his heart.

It was the soul of him that prayed now, a new soul sent from God; he was cleansed and white, and his heart grew tender and warm. He was being shaped anew, born again. The Devil lost hold after hold on him; his sins were taken away from him bit by bit, and the old Adam weakened and died. He held on with a miraculous content to the Saving Hand that he now thought he saw. And from the mark of the nail streamed into his lightened heart a sea of love and forgiveness.

When he had finished this happy prayer, the first real prayer that he had ever prayed, then he heard clearly the words:

"Be at peace, my son; your sins are forgiven."

Enok stood up. It was finished. In an instant as long as a lifetime it had happened, the miracle was accomplished. He was saved.

Confused and faint but happier than he ever thought that he could be, he knelt by the lamp and sang. It was the Song of Praise by Brorson.

*"Now I have found a rock on which
To cast Salvation's anchor..."*

Anna gazed half affrighted at her husband. He was very pale, and his face had a look that she had never seen there before — a fixed, entranced smile, though his eyes and cheeks showed that he had wept.



VII

NEVER had he believed that life in God could be so happy, not though the whole world had borne witness to it. He had read of "the peace that passeth all understanding," but it had been merely words without meaning. He had thought that salvation was a state of constant struggle which one kept up to escape hell. The joy they spoke of, the certainty of redemption, the heavenly rest, he thought must be a dream, something that they forced themselves to believe in as consolation for all that they had to give up here on earth.

Oh, that he had had no better understanding! Oh, that he could have deceived himself and so long shut himself off from that wonderful bliss!

Now he could feel free and see for himself — what he had hardly believed, he himself experienced. It was a far greater thing than he had heard of from any mouth or read of in any book; it was something that could not be described. He was in Heaven. He did not merely believe that he would be saved; he was saved. All his sins were cast into the sea, and never again would they appear before him. He was as white as wool, as white as the shining snow; the purity of Jesus was his. The Devil now could not touch him with even a finger. He was filled with an ecstasy of joy, a delight and a jubilation for

which there was no name. Everything else could be a lie; all else might be a dream. But of this he was sure: it was neither dream nor lie; it was the water of Eternal Life; it was the Alpha and Omega.

He was a new man, created by God's omnipotence despite his own understanding. That which before was his delight, he now prayed to be delivered from; that which before seemed poor and mean was now his life; instead of care and turmoil that he of himself could never have conquered, he now felt his heart flooded with light and warmth, gladness and love and strength. He had never conceived of such things, hardly understood them now.

Oh, joy beyond all joys! Oh, heavenly light and comfort that streamed like love songs through his soul! Ah, Death, where is thy sting? Thou poor Devil, where now is thy poor bravery, now that thou hast found that which can lead thee in bondage? Now thou canst lie there and writhe in the dust, thou old Serpent of Evil.

A burning desire for the Word of God and for prayer filled him; he could never be tired of walking with God. Prayer was the breath of his life, and the Word was his food — his food and his drink, his play and his pleasure, his one longing and steady aspiration. In the Word lay the breath of life and the kiss of God's mouth; his soul found its bridegroom in the flame of its love. They two were wedded there and were one in a fiery embrace.

Before, he had been outside the pale when the blessing was given. When the Lord spoke to His Chosen, Enok was not among them. Now he would no longer be outside; now he belonged to God's

flock and could listen to His words with the rest. All things bright and beautiful, all things high and noble, all His blessings and all His sweet words of love were all for him. Now he was free of all punishments and all lusts of the flesh; he was no longer under the law, but under grace. Victory, Hallelujah! Now the Word would open for him its riches and sweetness, and its wondrous riddles and its hidden meanings. He would swim in the light, bask in the warmth and the sun, grow strong in the abundance of good things of God. He would find help and support in all his troubles, comfort for his sorrows, healing for his hurts, certainty for his doubt, satisfaction for his wants, rest for his weariness, protection from all storms. The Word of God was his home, his dwelling place and his mansion, his temple and his refuge, his garden and his Eden. But when the evil days came and Satan set upon him, then the Word would be his armory and his fortress. There would he find both sword and shield, both bow and arrow, strength, too. And first and last he would find that which he had held when everything else had slipped — the strong Hand with the mark of the nail.

He had an almost childish desire to do God's will. It was his life now; he could not thrive now unless he did. Perhaps he earned nothing by it — nevertheless, even if he went to hell for it, he would still do God's will in small things and in large — in every tiny thing. He thought of nothing else save finding out what his Father above wanted him to do.

He got up in the morning at five o'clock. (One should not let the flesh conquer.) And Gunnar had

to get up, too, though he begged and whined to be let off, and though his mother pleaded for him. There should be no idolatry here, no petting and coddling. Serina had the measles, and so for a time she escaped — she always had the easy end of things. The day was sanctified with a song and a prayer in which the hired man and the girl had to join — Enok was the head of the household and was responsible for the state of their souls — but he did not get them to kneel down. Anna got off, too, since she was well along with their fifth child. But Gunnar had to kneel, however much he squirmed. Enok read one of the prayers in the series of "The Spiritual Chain."

After prayer they had breakfast. Enok forced them all to eat in silence — they should have reverence for God and His gifts. Moreover, they should remember that God was always present; so they should not desecrate mealtimes with idle talk and gossip. Before and after the meal they had a prayer and sang a stanza of a hymn. Then Enok went to work full of an eager gladness.

Work wore a new aspect for him; no longer was it slavery, mean toil, striving for money — it was service to God. The Lord would provide the necessities of life; it was not for them that we should labor, but because God would have us work. That was a heartening thought — that our daily work could serve God. Enok was the servant of God even if he stood in the midst of the dung heap. The lowliest work was as holy to Him as prayer or hymn; God had determined it for us. Now Enok no longer doubted that his work would be blessed. Would not God bless His own?

One morning he wandered around the whole farmstead, stables, cellar, loft, and all nooks and crannies, and held holiday with himself. The Spirit had taught him to see that all this which was before him was not his but belonged to his Father in Heaven. And in his heart he could resign everything. "Lord, Thine is the earth and the fullness thereof." He himself was only a user, a borrower, a tenant. He prayed for help to be a trustworthy tenant. "May Satan never mislead me so that I say that this is my own. May I use all after Your will and to Your honor, so that sometime You may say to me, 'Thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord.'"

But he was not yet finished. Was it not written that we should forsake all that we held dear in the world so that God's will might have place within us?

He resigned wife, child, kinsfolk, friends; he would have no other love than that which Jesus craved, the spiritual love that thought only of saving the soul.

So he went over his house and all his possessions to see what more there was to sacrifice. He found tobacco; he threw that in the fire. There must be more than that, though, he thought. He forswore all merriment and visits to his friends; he would never taste another drop, never listen to the lilt of a fiddle, never talk with people of other than serious things, and never read worldly books.

Tales and pictures of travel and foreign lands had formerly been among the chief joys of his spare

time; he had wasted evenings and Sundays on such trash, and the Devil had found it good help in keeping him away from the Lord. He went through his bookcase and found two books that dated from his teaching days, and that ought to be burned: "Reminiscences of a Trip through Siberia" and Snorri Sturlason's "Sagas of the Norse Kings." Then he found Gjest Baardsen's autobiography.* Well, that dealt with a sinner who had repented — that he could save. Then there was a year's issue of "The Family Friend" that should be burnt, and also "The Skilling Magazine" — that belonged to the library and would go back again as soon as the parson came around. Last of all, he found some newspapers from an earlier time, and those he sent to Per with the notice that he would no longer need them.

He took all the books down to the kitchen and was about to throw them in the fireplace. Anna trembled. "What! Are you going to burn those dear books?" She looked at him with frightened eyes for the rest of the day; so finally he changed his mind and, taking them up to the attic, tossed them into a chest of odds and ends.

In the garret were hanging some old skin garments that caught his eye and set his mind off on a new track. He looked himself over. His clothes were almost new. It was a fancy of his to go well clad — to deceive himself into thinking that he was a handsome fellow. The lust of the eye, and vanity; the old Adam in him calling. Away with such stuff and sinful

* Gjest Baardsen was a master thief who was condemned to life imprisonment but was pardoned, 1845. His autobiography was and is even now a favorite book among the common people.

desire. He changed into the leather garments. The trousers were wrinkled and short with great, baggy knees. The coat was too small, patched and ill-fitting, but it was good enough for his sinful body. He hunted up a little round skin cap with a visor and black sheepskin trimming and put it on his head. In the hallway he found a pair of wooden shoes. They could be no cause for vanity, he thought, and put them on. Then he felt warm and happy; in these clothes he was more secure against the onsets of Satan.

Just then Anna came out of the kitchen and started with fear at the sight of him. What sort of tramp was that? Then she saw that it was Enok. "For the Lord's sake, what have you thought of now?"

"You must not take the Lord's name in vain," he said.

"But you're not going out in those rags?"

"Don't you know that God made Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them? Leather is good enough for us, too, I think." He clumped on his way in his wooden shoes, and his old leather breeches rubbed and squeaked. Was he crazy?

The whole household was reorganized; Anna had to give way step by step. Every new whimsy that he hit upon was "God's will" and to all opposition he answered with quotations from the Scriptures. They had always felt a little in awe of Enok, but now that awe was changed to fear. Anna could not help it; she was afraid of him. It was as if he were bewitched — as if everything that he said came from another world; ordinary talk and argument no

longer bit on him. Beneath his stern eyes and cold, stiff glance she felt hypnotized — as powerless and helpless as if she were talking to a wall. Sometimes she gave way and cried, but tears had no more influence upon him than argument. "Your crying," he would say, "proves that God wants it this way. When God commands something, the flesh always weeps. 'The way of the flesh is hostile to God' and 'The spirit bears witness against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit.'"

He interfered in all sorts of trivial matters. God made no distinction between what was great and what was small; all was little to Him, and all could be great. He sought only our hearts — "Lust not after the things of the world" — and in the strife with the Devil it helped mightily to watch the little things.

Everything came back to self-denial: we should crucify the flesh with its lusts and desires; keep ourselves from "gluttony and drunkenness" — "cast off all that pertains to the desires of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, and worldly pride." Nor should we fatten ourselves with strong meat and please our mouths with many kinds of food and sauces. The poorest and the meanest that God gave us was good enough for this tenement of worms, this block of sin, that we called our body. God would give us health and strength if we prayed to him; we had no need to seek them in our food like pigs. There should be only one warm meal a day, and on Sunday none at all. That should be a day of rest in the kitchen as elsewhere.

Then, too, we should content ourselves with

what God gave us. What grew on our own soil should be good enough for us. We should not long for bought food, nor for the coffee-drinking that people had been taking up lately. If it had been God's will that we should drink coffee, he would have had coffee grow in our own land.

In our clothing and in our housekeeping we should follow the same plan — bought things were mere vanity and desire of the flesh. And it was just as foolish to dye our clothing. The tints that God had given us should be sufficient for us, and we should not try to improve upon His work. If we did not want to go clad in white, then we could keep black sheep and weave clothing from the wool that they gave. Or else we could go about in clothing of skins which was, after all, the material that God would have us make use of.

In the house we should be orderly and well-mannered. There should be no eating between meals even for the children. They especially should hold God's gifts in reverence. With assurance and absolute conviction could Enok say with Gideon, "I and my house will serve the Lord."

Anna gave up resisting him, for it was of no use. The fit that had come upon him would have to pass of itself. She would try to bear it and use what wits she had to get her way in secret. She would be thankful if he left her the keys.

No one could have made her believe that this would happen when she first came to the farm as a wife in her youth. Well, the world had burdens for all of us. If only Enok kept his senses. . . .



VIII

NOWADAYS the house was always still. Hans had already left; Marta would leave as soon as her term was over; every one went about silent and unsmiling. The only sounds were the clumping of Enok's wooden shoes here and there in the house, and the rustling of his leather breeches that sounded like whispering in corners. He spied about constantly; one never knew where he was.

Outside, the northwest wind groaned dismally; it boomed past the corners of the house and whistled by the windows. The air was gray with driving snow, and the earth lay frozen and stiff and dead, with ugly black patches here and there, or dirty drifts of snow.

People rarely came visiting now; they acted half fearful, for all sorts of rumors of Enok went about the parish. Per was the only one of the farmers nearby who dropped in, and he, like Enok, had had a period of terror after what had happened to Napolon in the fall. But his religious fervor soon died away, and he was seen no more. It finally got so that Anna was glad to welcome anybody to the farm, even if it were a pauper or a tramp; it was at least a break in the monotony of living. She could exchange a little gossip and hear new voices, break through the pall of silence that surrounded her.

It was a real comfort when their turn came to house the parish pauper, old Guri. She had a ready tongue and she could deal with Enok. She was bent and sickly, one-eyed and lame, but she still had her wits about her, and through many a long twilight and evening, she would talk with Enok of the Blood of Christ and His five wounds, or of Satan and his high temptations. Sometimes they quarrelled so that it was good to hear, and now and then Guri said things to Enok that he might benefit by, especially that he was worried about too many things. "But one thing is needful," she would say smilingly.

At infrequent intervals one of the old followers of Hauge * would drop in, and then things brightened up. They were milder in their ways than Enok, and she thought that he ought to follow their example. Save for this one thing they were in agreement with him: he was too strict, they thought — especially over small matters of conduct. God made no such demands on us; such insistence on little things might lead to self-righteousness and Pharisaism. Enok, however, defended himself well. It had been his desire, he said, to let God rule him in all ways, and for this reason we should all bear witness that we acknowledge God and do His every bidding. Then the old men sighed and said: "You are greatly blessed, Enok, but you must not feel too secure."

One Saturday evening Lars Danielson came down from Ness; for a while Anna had a renewed hope that this man could so influence Enok that he might change his ways, for Lars was a sensible man

* Hans Nielsen Hauge was a lay preacher who had an immense influence in stimulating the religious life of the people. He died 1824.

even though he was godly, and had a special gift for getting along with people. They had a good time with him, even though he and Enok argued about many things and disputed vigorously over the interpretation of the Scriptures. Lars held that Enok was making the Gospel too much into law, but Enok would not hear of it. On fundamental things, however, they were agreed; there was after all only one thing of importance for both of them and that was "Jesus Christ the Crucified." Since they agreed on this, they could afford to pass over all lesser matters. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not," said Paul. They prayed together on Sunday morning, and Anna thought that things were looking up. None the less, they did not part friends.

Enok would not lend Lars his house for a revival meeting. That Lars should labor with his brother when he met him upon the way was only fit and proper, but to speak God's word at a gathering was another matter. No one had any right to do that unless he had been so ordained by God. Our God was a God of order; he had set every one in his calling and wanted him to serve Him there; he desired no self-bidden help. "If we have a service let us take heed to it," said Paul. The dispute was bitter, and harsh words flew between them. "Don't believe," said Enok, "that I haven't been tempted to go about and preach; the flesh tempted me sorely for a space, because there was honour to win by it and an easy life." (Lars coughed and reddened.) "But I sought and found an answer in the Scriptures. 'When you set yourself up as a teacher,' said the Holy Spirit to me, 'in the first place you neglect

your own calling, and in the second place you are going against God.' It is as if you said to God that He hadn't given us enough teachers; that He hadn't treated us well enough so that you think that you ought to help Him. That feeling, Lars, is only spiritual vanity and sin." Lars stood up for himself valiantly and well—he had an inner call from the spirit if not an outer one; many were servants of God even if they had no licence from the king. Enok, however, did not yield a whit. "The powers that be are ordained by God, and if we set ourselves against God's commands, no matter how much we think we have a call, that call does not come from God; it can just as well be only of the flesh." They parted with prayers to God that the other might see the light, and Lars was red in the face when he left.

The only days that the household could really enjoy were those on which Enok was away. One day when he had gone to Aase with the Commissioners of the Poor, there was almost a celebration on the farm, even though the women had clothes to wash and Gunnar had to stay in the cellar and pick over the potatoes. There was good food on the table, talking and laughter. Gunnar picked over a half a pail of potatoes in wild haste and dashed into the bedroom with his wagon on which he had found no time to work since his father had changed.

It was a raw, cold day; the snow was falling heavily and the air was sour and cheerless. A cup of coffee would taste good, they thought, and Anna had a little laid away. Enok was not to come home before night, and the maid expected a cup of coffee

on wash-day. Soon the whole house was fragrant with the scent of boiling coffee, and the women folk were so blithe and merry that they giggled in sheer good spirits. But by a miracle or some black magic, Enok turned up just as the coffee was done. Anna heard him in the passageway and shook so that she felt sick. She took the kettle off the crane and set it under the bench; her heart hammered and there came a ringing in her ears. Then the door flew open and Enok stood on the threshold.

He merely stood there.

She was terror-stricken, even though she had done no wrong. She felt somehow guilty, felt his eyes boring into her spine. The air was black and still about her as it is just before a storm.

"Is this the way in which you submit yourself unto your own husband — as unto the Lord?" he said slowly and coldly.

She felt a long repressed, fierce anger surge up in her, and the words came into her mouth. "There was no sense in my throwing out the coffee that we still had." She was standing with her back to him and crouched against the bench.

"Now, you must not be hypocritical, Anna. You know good and well that I wanted you to. That was why you grabbed the chance when I was away. But there is One who sees you. He managed it so that I came upon you in the act. Let this be a lesson to you another time. There'll be no coffee carousals in my house, and if you yourself won't throw out that fire-water, then I'll do it." He came closer.

"Throw out God's gifts?" She sank down on

the bench; she had never heard of anything so awful. Her eyes were so frightened that he was for a moment uneasy.

"If it had been brandy, that would have been a different matter," she continued. "But so many times I've had help from a cup of coffee especially when I have a pain in my breast — and it looks as if it was going to keep on." She struggled with sobs.

"If you're sick, then pray to God for help; He's punishing you for your sins."

"I thought we should use the remedies that He has given us," she sobbed.

"'Pray for one another, and confess your sins to one another, that ye may be healed,' it stands."

Now she was going to give it to him; she was so angry that she did not weigh her words. "I don't see why I shouldn't have a word to say in this house. I didn't come to this farm so poor that..." Scared of her own courage she hastened to qualify. "If there is never to be any peace in the house, you will have to have it your way. You know that I'm only a poor woman... and have no one to stand by me." She burst into tears. "And now things have come to such a pass... that you begrudge me a little thing like that..."

"There surely must be some sort of devilishness in that coffee if it can be so dear to flesh and blood. You should be only the more glad to give it up, as I gave up tobacco."

He came forward, took up the kettle and went out the back door.

"Take care what you do!" she burst out in fear; "there may come a day when you will be so

poor that you will beg for a cup of coffee for God's sake."

"I and all my possessions are in God's hand," said he, almost scared. Then he went out and threw the coffee on the manure heap.

When he came in again, Anna was in bed. He understood what the matter was: she was trying in her own way to frighten him, but as long as he went God's way, everything would be all right. "Where's Gunnar?" he asked.

"I thought that you drove him down cellar this morning," she sighed bitterly.

At that instant Gunnar moved in the bedroom. He must have heard what she said, for he hadn't dared move since his father had come into the house. Now he was going to be whipped. She pulled the quilt over her head and tried to shut out the sounds, but when Gunnar got his whipping out in the kitchen, he screamed so loud that she could not shut out the noise. She heard everything, and the sound cut through her like knives. She began to tremble so violently that she was almost scared, and reached up to the bed-cupboard for the Hoffmann's drops. When Enok finally came in, she got up courage to say a word so burning that it did her soul good. "You must ask Marta to come; I've got to send for the midwife." Thanks be to God, she saw that had its effect on Enok.

Gunnar lay in the dark cellar, nursed his wrath against his father, and wept. He would never finish that wagon of his, but he had one trick left — he would work on Sundays.

Every other Sunday, services were held in the

church at Aase. His father attended, and Gunnar was free for a time. There was only the wretched lesson to do, and he could probably do that Saturday evening.

When next Sunday came, however, Enok told them that he was going to stop going to church. He had nothing against the clergy — that was not the trouble. And he knew that God's word was just as effective even though it was uttered by a worldly man, but God wanted him to be a parson in his own home. He couldn't take them all to church with him, and while he was away, he was afraid that they were neglecting God's service at home. . . . Therefore he would stay at home himself so that no one of his should lack spiritual sustenance.

Gunnar grinned with anger and then fell to weeping — and got a whipping that made him writhe. So that hope was quenched, and Sunday became the worst day in the week, though for Enok it was the happiest.

From morning till night he could take delight in the Scriptures, be clean swept away with the ecstasy of the Word and His Grace. God led him in His greenest pastures and to His clearest springs; he grew fat like an ox in a meadow; basked in Grace like a child on a sunny slope.

The green table was moved into the living room — it was to be the table for spiritual sustenance, just as the red table was the dining table for the body. The reading table was set between the windows under the mirror where there was plenty of light; the dining table was put down in the dark corner next the door. Enok stood by the reading

table and was parson in his own home; his face was wreathed in an angelic smile, and he smacked his lips with pleasure.

How fine it was to be together with Jesus in the sweetest communion of love. It was no matter if a storm raged without, and the heavens were gray and cold. When the black trees outside groaned and screeched of winter and death and the futility of all striving, they inside could answer with hallelujahs. What did it matter if the world was cold if they had the sun and light within them?

In the long dusk when he could no longer see, he sat down and talked of the goodness of God. He told them how happy he felt now, and how miserable he had felt before, explained what God had shown him and taught him since their last meeting, quoted certain texts that he had marked and made commentaries upon them for those who were there. Anna often felt that she was aimed at, and Gunnar had his conduct commented on, and if Marta were there, there was something for her, too — usually because she wandered about the farm on Sunday instead of staying in and serving God.

Gunnar was helpless at first; he always had to stay in and listen. He usually fell asleep and then caught a whipping. After that, he was made to stand by the table while his father read so that he might keep awake. That helped a little, but Johan Arndt was endless. There were "The Seven Essential Articles of the True Christianity," and even though Gunnar tried his best, he could never keep awake beyond the third. He tried and tried for a space — tried, tried, rubbed his eyes, thought of the whip.

"But this is the true basis and foundation of Truth and no one can come to God without a true knowledge..." (The whip, think of the whip.) "for there is no delight in anything else, neither is there another name..." Gunnar nodded, nodded, and straightened up, nodded and straightened up, n-o-d-d-e-d... and fell asleep. Ah! He awoke with a start, saw a white mist before his eyes. Uf! There was Father, the whip. He *must* stay awake.

Finally, however, he found a method of escape. Things went better when he no longer paid any attention to his father, but thought only of the wagon that he was building. He thought how the wagon would look, how he would build it, where he was going to get the paint, and what color each part was going to be. He grew accustomed to this process after a time so that he felt that he almost had the wagon before him. Afterwards he went on to other things, built a little mill, constructed a boat, thought out a scheme whereby he could make it go. Finally this train of thought pleased him so much that he continued it at other times and on other days than Sunday. The worst of it all was that Serina got out of everything; she settled down on a stool behind her mother when her father began, and dozed and slept as much as she wanted to.

Enok perceived that he was going to have a struggle, but he was merely happy at the thought. A follower of Jesus should have his struggles in this world. And he was going to win, for now he had help. Anna's heart would soften when the time came, and he was not afraid for the children. He would bear them straight forward to God and let the Spirit

work in them through the Scriptures. And if God tried him for a while, he would not lose his patience. Gunnar was the worst; the old Adam was strong in him, but God was going to help and had given him a divine gift in the supple, sharp birch rod. At some happy time he could say with Gideon: "Here am I, Lord, and all those Thou hast given me."

The world might fleer and scoff, and folk might believe that he was crazed, but to be hated and despised for Christ's sake was the happiest thing of all. And as Arndt said, the more one is hated by the children of earth, the more certain is he of his Christendom. There would come a day when he could laugh and let them weep.

The worst struggle of all was within himself; though he was now on Mount Tabor, it could not be forever. He knew already where he was weakest and from what quarter Satan would attack—love of the world and desire for the things of the world had always been his pet vices. There it was that he must keep up a watch. In his heart he put the world from him; now it behooved him to root out all thoughts and desires so that they could not creep in upon him again. To watch and pray; to watch and pray. If he swerved ever so little, the Fiend could pounce upon him.

He prayed to God for a strong word with which to shut out the world from him, and one day while thinking of this, he happened to open the Bible, and his eyes fell on these words of Jesus: "Take no thought for the morrow."

There was the Word. He raised his eyes to God

and thanked Him. With those words he could shut out the world from him as with a wall of brass.

Not to think any farther than he saw; to live wholly with God in the present. As soon as there came a thought of the past or the future, a dream of things to come, to remember to take no thought for the morrow, and Satan's wiles would be of no avail.

His eyes were wet with tears of happiness and gratitude. What trouble would it be to fight with Satan when God himself gave him weapons? What a richness of support and strength lay in the least of God's words, if only the soul had open eyes with which to see.

Enok wandered in the light. He ringed about "the here" and "the now" with prayers and dwelt with God in the present moment. All his worldly cares and desires were lifted from his shoulders. He sat hidden in God as in a fortress.

All that was not clearly the will of God was displeasing to Him. In a case of indecision, he did that which went most against the flesh and blood, and then he came the nearest to God's will. And the Holy Spirit bore witness that he was on the right path. But if he was weak and yearned after the flesh, then straightway he grew unclear in his understanding; clouds came before the sun, and his heart grew cold and dark. The Holy Spirit worked in him continually so that every day he grew wiser.

He read in the Testament the great words of judgment that on the Day of Doom shall separate the good and the evil. "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me

drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in. . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." He turned to his wife and said, "Do you hear, Anna? Our Father will have us never to deny poor folk food and lodging, for what we do unto them, we do unto Jesus."

Anna squirmed in her chair. "You know that a good many pass by here," she ventured.

"Don't worry about that," he said. "The more that come, the greater will be our reward in Heaven."

One day he came in with a new fancy. "Now we'll have a child of Jesus in the house," he said.

She looked up at him. What was he at now?

"The widow at Heialand," he continued, "was here and complained of her poverty, and so I told her that I would promise to take one of her daughters in with us so that it could be a little lighter for her. I know that it is the will of God, and I can hardly believe that you will have anything against it."

Anna sighed patiently and heavily. "How old is she?"

"She's about twelve years old, and she can be of some use about the house after Marta is gone."

"What, aren't we going to have a maid any longer?" she asked uneasily.

"If you can find a girl who turns to Jesus, you can take her in, but I'll have no more worldly people here."

Anna turned away.

"I'll not keep a hired man any longer," he went

on complacently. "I know that God is a strength in our weakness, and he will help me. And if He helps me, He will help you, too, if you pray to Him. Then, too, Serina is beginning to grow up."

If only she could understand what was going on in his head.

"It is really lack of faith to keep servants. It is as if we didn't believe that God could help us with the work that He Himself has set us to do. We must believe; if we had faith as a mustard seed, we could move mountains, you know."

"Well, . . . since you plainly want to make an end of me, so . . . Oh, I'm so weary of everything," she said in a voice choked with weeping, "that it hardly matters . . ."

"You'll see that things will go better than you think," Enok comforted her. "He is all powerful in Heaven and on earth; your little struggles are as nothing to Him. God is a strength in our weakness. Remember that, and pray to Him."

He clumped off on his wooden shoes, blithely enough. Anna looked after him, disheartened and weary. The tears ran down her face, but she did not notice them.



IX

SCHOOL was going to start soon and Anna was glad of it. The week every fall and spring when school was held in the house was a pleasant time for her. Of course, she had her cares and troubles then, but there was much that was a comfort to her. She could drive away many a heavy thought by merely watching all the fresh young children. They took the world lightly, had no care for anything beyond what they saw. Their time would come later, but they were thoroughly enjoying the present. She liked to sit in the inner room and listen while the schoolmaster held his recitations; she herself was benefited. Even if she did not learn anything new, she could refresh her memory with many things that she had almost forgotten. Then, too, she remembered the time when she was young, often thought that she lived again her childhood in these hours.

When the dusk came on and the school stopped for the day, the schoolmaster sat about with the rest of the household and talked with them — and then it was no less pleasant. She could find out about things that one had never known of, and if everybody laughed and jested, there was at least never any foolishness. They had known Tarald Aksdal so well that he seemed almost one of them, and there was much sorrowing amongst them all, great and small.

when they heard that he was going to give up the school.

This year they were going to have Tönes, the young son of Torkjell Tualand, as teacher. They wondered if things were going to be as pleasant. They did not know the lad very well; he had grown up with an uncle of his farther south; they knew only that he was considered queer. He had never gone about much with boys of his own age, and his family had never made him work; he wanted only to read and write — it was even said that he wrote verse. His uncle had sent him to a 'Teachers' School, as they called it, in the south so that he could become a schoolmaster. Well, they'd see. He should at any rate be a clever teacher since he had been to school to learn how to teach; he might be good for Gunnar, for he was slow with book learning. He had head enough, but he lacked all desire to learn.

It was strange enough to hear that Gunnar wanted to go to school this year, but there was a special reason that Anna one day discovered. His father had made him a pair of leather breeches, and he was so ashamed of them that since he had got them he was shy of people. He shunned even his former playmates, the children of Per to the north of them, and little Oline even had laughed at him the first time that she saw the breeches. He had wooden shoes, too, and was no prouder of them. He knew that at school he was to wear his Sunday clothes and was so glad of that that he forgot his dislike of books.

His mother had to laugh. "Well, the breeches have done one good thing, anyway," she said.

Something was bound to happen, however; it seemed as if things were bewitched.

They were sitting around the fire one evening a few days after the "Jesus child" had come over from Heialand—a dark little girl called Jorina. Enok was setting hoops around some buckets, Anna and Marta were spinning, Gunnar and Serina were reading, and Jorina was carding.

Suddenly Marta burst out laughing. What she was thinking of was so amusing that she could not refrain from telling of it. "I can't help laughing," she said, apologetically. She had been standing down by the brook that day, and she had seen the half crazy Student Olsen come swinging along. He was dressed in a long coat and silk hat, carried a cane, and was so erect and rigid that he had called her attention to him. The road was full of snow and he could not step out as he wanted to. He was in high good humor, walked along with his nose in the air, but he could not stride along for his swaying and dipping. "Oh, it was so funny! Hi, hi. There must have been a slippery spot along the way; suddenly he fell backwards full length, his rump in a snow-drift and his feet in the air. His hat flew to one side and his cane to another, and Olsen swore so that the air was blue about him. Hi, hi, hi, I laughed so that I had a stitch in my side."

The others laughed with her save for Enok who sat silent and sober and pounded away at a hoop. Then he looked up and glowered at them. The room grew still; every one took up his work again. Marta grew red and made the spinning wheel buzz.

"We should never laugh," said Enok. "Jesus never laughed."

"Well, it's of no use for us to measure ourselves up against Him." Anna had stopped her wheel and was busy with the distaff.

"Perhaps not, but we should follow His example. And we should remember that we must make accounting at the Day of Judgment for every useless word that we have spoken."

The wheels whirled.

"It doesn't say that in my Book of Explanations," ventured Jorina, blushing and coughing with embarrassment.

"What does it say?" asked Enok gently. He rather liked this "Jesus child."

"It says, 'every improper word that you have spoken.' Ahem." She was as red as fire.

"Oh, you've got hold of the wrong Book of Explanations. You must burn it, Jorina. I must buy you another one when I go to town."

Anna and Marta stared. "What's that you say? Isn't the new Book of Explanations right?"

"There are two new books; only one of them can be right."

"Yes, but are they allowed to print such things?"

"Well, you know, there will come false Christs and false prophets in the latter days, and they'll be so clever and keen that they will lead astray even the elect. This Parson Wexels is just such a false prophet. God has let him wander from the true path that he may believe lies."

"That is terrible." The wheels began to turn again.

"Yes," sighed Enok, "it is terrible. One should always pray to God to watch over him and guard him from evil. Think, he has gone so far as to believe that there is pardon for them that are in hell."

"What, can he be so blind?" The wheels stopped.

"That's just what he has put in his Book of Explanations, so the simple-minded may believe that it is really the Word of God."

"Can it be possible?"

"Yes, one can hardly believe it."

The room grew still. Jorina, who sat farthest back, drew nearer the light.

"And he's a parson, too, I thought I heard you say?" asked Marta.

"Yes, he's a parson."

"Yes, but not a parson now," said Anna; "he can't hold services in the church, can he?"

"Let's hope not. He can put out books though, and that's worse. He can lead more astray with them."

"I can't understand how he can do it." The wheels whirred slowly and thoughtfully.

"He'll be punished — on the Great Day," said Enok. He whacked away as if he had the parson under his hammer. "It says, 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'"

"But why does our parson allow such a book about? I can't understand that."

"Well, it was authorized, and so he thought that he would be safe enough. There is a punishment that God lets fall upon us if we do not honor the truth. He lets us have lies instead, since he sees that we delight in lies."

"Yes, I see."

"My children, though, won't go to school, and neither will Jorina. We are afraid of giving our children poison, but isn't that a worse poison which slays both body and soul and damns them to hell? I'll teach school myself. God will give me the time since He sees that it is necessary."

Anna glanced over at Gunnar, poor lad. My, what an ugly look he gave his father. And now she herself would get no pleasure out of school either. She would not sit and hear that the schoolmaster taught falsehoods to the poor children.



X

MARTA stayed on until Anna's fifth child came, and then left. Enok was happy now. At last he was free from the world; all his past had slipped away; life had been renewed and his house was as secluded and peaceful as a temple. Now nothing should be heard therein save praise of God.

The days passed and Enok still stood on Tabor. He felt no cares and no despair but lived in Grace as secure and happy as a child. If he wearied, he had but to turn to God and find a new strength in prayer or the Scriptures. The Saving Hand never failed him. Wherever he walked or stood, he was in God's bosom. Sleeping or waking, alive or dead, he knew that he belonged to the Lord, and no evil could have power over him. He was even free from sin; true enough, he sinned every moment, but sin had no root in his heart. As Paul had said, it was not he that sinned; it was sin that dwelt within him. Everything evil or unclean was daily washed from him in the Blood of Jesus; he was as free and light as a bird on a bough, and he could leap with delight as David had around the Ark. He no longer bothered about the world; he knew that he was stronger than the world, thanks be to the boundless depths of mercy that made his soul strong and happy, set free a man who was despairing and doomed, raised again what

his sin had shamed, bound fast Satan and Death and Evil. Now he was as Adam had been before the Fall, when the world had been a paradise and God walked amongst the trees and flowers, and took delight with His children in the sunny spring.

Spring itself was in his heart now. After a long, black winter, the sun had come forth and driven away the clouds and the cold, gentled the storm and the wind, melted the snow and ice, set free all the currents and sounds of life. She had sent a soft, sweet rain over all the things that lay dumb and dead, and suddenly spring had risen with flowers and leaves and delicate fragrance, and over all the world had come life and happiness. So it was with him. Within him all had turned green and lusty; his heart was warm and blossoming, full of peace and sympathy and the power of love—not the fleshly love that makes one weak and soft, but the love of Christ that gives one purpose and energy. He could not endure one thought that was not of God; not an idle dream or desire, that was not a prayer or a promise. Every sin that he recognized seemed to him like a snake in the grass; his heart would be beautiful and adorned for its bridegroom—that was the one desire that he had now.

God was in everything—in the air, in the earth, in the water, in fire, in the mighty storm and the gentle breeze, in work, in rest, in sleep, and in his awakening. He was never very far away; he had only to seek Him wherever he was. When the sun shone, it was His eyes that shone; rain and hail were His hands; but the stars at night were the eyes of angels, a sparkling warning from the many thou-

sands who circled about God and waited for us. They watched over us and guarded us in all our ways, supported us when we stood, raised us when we fell. Many times when the wind fanned his cheeks, he felt the swish of white wings.

In the storm, too, he heard God's voice, and in the roar of the surf, the roll of the thunder, and all sounds. God's voice sighed, echoed, resounded through the world to eternity. Therefore the godless trembled and had no peace; they were afraid of their Father because they had not acknowledged Him. They felt as Gunnar did when he had done wrong; he did not understand that his father desired only his good when he came to him with a whip. Smilingly he thought back to the time when he himself had gone in fear though he had had reason enough; the voice of the Lord of Sabaoth was dreadful to His enemies.

So well did things go that at times he wondered. Was it going to last? Could a child of God have such an easy time here on earth? He had expected struggles and combat, and yet he was almost always on Tabor. Everything went so smoothly, so wonderfully smoothly; God worked in him through will and act. Was he not worthy of being put to the final proof? What was His Father's intention?

All of the men of God talked of obstacles, of combats and high temptations, of purification by fire; Lars Danielson had said straight out that he mustn't feel too blissful; it could well be only a wile of Satan, he said, to make him feel more secure so that he would relax and later on be the more easily overcome. "It's like these plants that the man at Myre

sets out in the glass house. They climb up fast the first year and look fine, but they have grown lush and weak in their good days; when they are set out and have to face the autumnal storms and the cold nights, they fall away and die off, because they haven't the stuff in them to endure." Old Guri had said the same thing. She herself had had hard times with depressing and heavy thoughts, but she "thanked God more for those dark days than for His sweetest times of Grace, for when the Lord punishes, then it is clear that He loves." Didn't God love him? There were days when this question came to torment him.

No, it couldn't be Satan that made him so happy; it was sinful to think it. He had only to give himself into God's hands and let Him counsel him. Our Father knew what was best for us and what we should endure of good and evil. He would send punishment when He saw that it was deserved. Enok came to see that even in material things he served a good Lord; there was a blessing on and a profit in everything. All that he touched dripped with fat. He always had something to sell, and God was good to him so that he regularly got the highest prices for things. It was as if the worldly ones would rather trade with a child of God than with one of themselves; they could recognize the difference, he supposed.

In another way God had blessed him and heard his prayers. The child that had come had been a boy. Hadn't the Lord overwhelmed him with blessings, taken pains to show that He was with him?

As spring drew on, Anna asked him how he was

going to get along without help. "Our Father will take care of that," said Enok. And his faith was not shamed. Enok had done as God wished to the poor folk round about; he had lent them food and seed when they had come and asked for it. Now one after another came and wanted to work for what he had received; thus Enok had enough help and cheap help, for one always got through best when he did not have to put out cash. Our Father took nothing from us without return.

In this way he got for the spring work Torkjell Tualand, who for all his five and fifty years was a good worker when he wanted to be. And he wanted to be when he was working with people who were good to him. One fault he had — he could not control his mouth. He criticized everything, most of all those things that God would have us reverence. If it had not been a good deed to keep him, Enok would rather have had another man. Torkjell had had a hard time latterly, though. He had owned one of the likeliest farms in the parish; then he had got caught in the Thrane* movement and forgotten work and everything else, got in debt, and was driven by the law from his farm. Sheriff Aase had been pretty harsh with Torkjell that time, they said, but whether he had or not, Torkjell had to go and was finally glad enough to settle on a croft south in the Ramstad hills. Now he lived mainly by working out, and Enok

* Marcus Thrane about the middle of last century initiated the Norwegian labor movement. Though his demands now would be considered very mild, he was regarded by the authorities of his own time as a dangerous man. He was imprisoned, and his adherents, who often were much more extreme than he, were in various ways persecuted.

could not keep him away when he wanted to come and work for the meal that he had borrowed.

Torkjell could be annoying. One day during the spring work they were sitting by the table at an early lunch after they had been driving out manure. Torkjell suddenly had the idea that they were too silent.

"Heh!" he burst out with his stammering voice, twisting his goat-like face sidewise and blinking, "I suppose you're looking at my fists, Anna? You get no cleaner standing on a dung heap, and one's got to sweat a bit. Your husband there is no neater than I am."

"We shall eat our bread in the sweat of our brows, you know."

"Heh, the sheriff doesn't eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. He sits inside and smokes cigars, and stuffs himself with roast veal and Bavarian beer. Well, he's done harm enough; now he can take his fill."

"'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people,' says Paul."

"Well, what does Jesus, Son of Sirach, say? 'Whosoever takes away from his neighbor his sustenance, slays him, and whosoever robs a wage-earner of his wages, sheds blood.' They spoke the truth straight out in the old days, and for that saying they have put Jesus, Son of Sirach, in the Apocrypha."

"Oh, it wasn't for that."

"Well, I don't know what they did it for; those who rule us don't give us reasons for their actions."

"You should remember, Torkjell, that God has given them their power."

"So? Heh! It was that old drunkard Prefect Rickert that installed the sheriff at Aase."

"Perhaps that was for a punishment. We should humble ourselves and pray to God that He may give us good counsel."

"Yes, there are many who pray — and afterwards they devour widows' houses."

"Well, I mean that we should all be true Christians."

"Humph! Who is? The only ones are those who live according to the words of Jesus, and what did Jesus say? 'Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor,' He said. And I don't see any of them doing it — neither the parson nor Lars Danielson."

Enok was silent.

"Yes, but then we'd all be poor," said Anna, "and there would be no one to help those in need."

"I don't believe that there would be any poverty if we did what we should. Throw out all these strutting officials and these pot-bellied clerics and the military jingoists, and there would be food for all of us. Heh! It'd be queer if Our Lord had created more of us than He could feed."

It was useless to try to stop Torkjell's mouth. Enok remained quiet.

It was a cold spring and people grumbled. The northwest wind that blew continually kept both the hay and the crops from growing. Enok understood that God was trying his patience and found a kind of satisfaction in it. Perhaps his punishment was coming now. "Thanks be to Thee, Lord, whether

Thou bless or take away. Thou wilt forever be my rock and my refuge."

Torkjell Tualand's words came back to him now and then, and tormented him. It was true enough; those were the words of Jesus. What if he should take other poor children into his house? Jorina was so helpful that he could well say that it had been God's will that he should take her in. He came back to the house one day with a tall, red-haired lad with a scurfy head. He was named Lukas. Anna received him with a sigh; they'd go on this way as long as they could. Enok thought that his heart was straightway at peace again.

Lukas stayed on till the fall; he had only one fault, but that was a serious one — he was finicky about his food. Enok had no idea of changing the custom of the house for him, and they quarrelled one day when Enok tried to use force. Either Lukas would eat salt mackerel or go supperless to bed. Lukas got up from the table, bowed, took his clothes and left. Enok was indignant.

Two weeks later he had another Jesus child. He was a heavy, pale lout named Haavar, the son of a shiftless farmer who lived in a mud hut on the Heialand marshes. The Haave farm must have seemed to him like heaven after his potato cellar of a home. And he was not at all finicky; he ate all that he could get hold of and more too, but when he was not eating, he slept. One day along in the winter, Anna found out that he was stealing. She had noticed that food was disappearing from the pantry faster than Gunnar alone could manage. She grew suspicious and found Haavar was the guilty one.

She went out to tell Enok at once, and he was so tired of the lad that he sent him packing.

After that Enok was worried for some time and didn't know what he should think. Sell all and give it to the poor?

Finally he came to a decision. He had had God against him this time because he had thrust himself forward and had not waited on the Lord. Now he must be patient, take no one in the house until he had some sign from God. But his house should stand open for all that should come and ask for food and lodging; God could ask no more of him than that. It could not be His intention that he should sell his farm and become a tramp himself. . . . He'd ask the parson about that saying which he had never before thought of.

That winter seemed endless. The only thing that helped Anna was her housework which kept her busy from morning till night; she had no time to think. It was not the usual house tasks that bothered her, but those that Enok forced upon her. Many times she was at her wit's end.

The house had little by little become a regular assembly hall for tramps. The word had been passed along the ways that Enok was holding open house for whoever asked, and they surged in in troops — ordinary tramps and gypsies, all the refuse of humanity that wandered up and down the country, sought refuge with Enok. There were days when she could do nothing else save wait on tramps.

The worst of all was the lodging of them. Dirty and diseased, they came in, and full of vermin. It was impossible to give them beds, and they were

afraid to keep them in the hayloft; so she laid beds for them on the floor of the living room. It was disquieting and sometimes terrifying to have a flock of gypsies lying along the floor; one never knew what they might do. Mornings she had to clean up after them and that was disgusting work. She often thought that if Enok had had that work to do, he would not have been so keen to take them all in, but it was of no use to talk to him about it.

He thought that things were going well enough. "See, now aren't we getting along well enough without a maid?" he said one day. "If only we live according to God's Word and get up early. . . ." She hardly knew whether to laugh or cry.

What kept the house from being completely overrun with tramps was that Enok kept them in order so that they could not do as they wished. They finally passed the word along that one had to listen to prayers at Enok's house, and get up early; that did not please tramps. So there were only a few who came regularly, and they were such as wanted to be a little better than the rest. Of the gypsies there was only one group that kept coming; that was Gypsy Tomas and his troupe.



XI

IT was the first really fine day that they had had — a day when one could not stay indoors. The skies arched above the earth, soft and blue like a dream of light. The world was flooded with sunshine that sparkled and streamed over the fields; the gentle salt breeze from the sea mingled with the keen, fresh mountain air from the east; a thousand scents of sap and bark and fresh manure were carried abroad. One drew deep and happy breaths of the air that swathed one's limbs like a gentle flow of water. From the sun-warmed hills and the pale green meadows the larks circled upward towards the mountain tops and the sun, and filled the blue arch with the jubilant clangor of silver bells.

Along the stone walls and the roadsides and on the sunny hillsides new grass had already begun to spring, and here and there dandelions and lady-slippers glowed. Shiny-leaved water plants shot up in the marsh patches and along the brooks; the new foliage was pushing out and hanging like flowers on the trees in the little groves. The fresh shoots of willow, myrtle, and heather nodded and dipped in marsh and field, and exhaled a spicy, biting perfume. Everywhere the birds were playing about — birds in pairs and in flocks, gray birds and brown birds, yellow, speckled, and white birds, in an

ecstasy of joy, in joy of movement. They were wild with love, billed and cooed, fought and squawked, drunken with sunshine. Wings gleamed in the sun, and white breasts, as they circled and dipped in the dizzy spring dance. Far aloft here and there one or two gulls soared with sleepy wing-beats out towards the sea, giving the clear call that betokens good weather. A pair of eiderdown ducks or a loon, a pair of herons, a flock of wild geese, strange and royal birds, passed overhead with outstretched necks, toward the north to secret and hidden knolls and waters, far, far away where none could follow.

The lapwing darted over the marsh in quick flights and filled the air with its fiery, sharp cry that sounded like the high note of a fiddle. Its silky breast gleamed and its wings whirred. On lonely tufts among the heath uplands the brown and gray plover with its black velvet breast gave at intervals its clear, ringing, flute-like call; snipes and starfinches and other marsh birds sprang here and there, and scratched with their red feet and cried to one another. And for the first time that year the cuckoo gave his call from the groves above Storbrekke.

The mountains in the east rose blue and sharp as if they had been newly washed and decorated for a festival. The lowlands stretched outward and downward in long sweeps, brown and warm, wrapped about in the lush scents of spring. Far to the west the sea gleamed, a pale blue line.

It seemed as if all creation sighed — now it is spring; now we can live again for awhile, live and play, live and struggle, for a long time, a long, long time, as long as we wish — till winter comes.

Gunnar and Jorina were out in the cow pasture cleaning up the winter's debris. Enok was at Aase in a meeting and was not expected home before the afternoon. The work was light and the day fine; they were in such good spirits that they could hardly contain themselves.

The sun was warm on their backs and like a caress upon their necks; the whole world was once again light and warm. Though it was an ugly place, today it seemed almost beautiful. From meadow and marshes rose such a warm, keen fragrance that they were half-entranced. They felt kindly toward one another and talkative. Jorina taught Gunnar a new way of talking. Yes was yedeves, no, nedevo; Hedevaadeve was the same as Haave. Gunnar practised and soon could say whole sentences. Now they would soon be able to say what they wanted to, even if their father was standing by and listening to them. Jorina, however, was afraid that he would ask them what they were saying, and "It's not easy to lie so there's any sense in it." That was too true; Gunnar hadn't thought of that. He was on one knee digging up stones with a stout stick. "I wish that I could make myself invisible," he said. Jorina was near him raking up rubbish into heaps for carting away.

"It's only the hill people that can do that," she said. They began to talk about the hill people, whom Gunnar had known little about before; the work dragged.

"Why is it that the hill people can make themselves invisible and we can't?" he said.

"Yes, it is a wonder; it would be fun for us."

"Yes, and useful too, sometimes."

"Can the Will-o'-the-wisp make himself invisible?"

"He is invisible; it's only his light that we see, and we don't see that all the time."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes, in the evening when it is dark he often flickers about in the Heialand marshes. They say there is a great treasure buried down there, but Mother doesn't believe that. She thinks that there is a murdered man who is buried there, because murdered people walk about like ghosts if it is never found who killed them."

Jorina began to tell a grisly story, and they both forgot their work. Jorina made mere motions with her rake; her little sea-green eyes stared straight before her as if into another world.

"...But anyway, Uncle Aasmund was so sleepy and sick-like once that he forgot to say, 'Our Father Who art in Heaven' before going to bed. He didn't fall asleep, but lay on his bed in a doze and he saw the door open up, but there wasn't any noise, and then in stalked something high and tall in a white sheet."

"Huff!"

"He wasn't afraid, because he hadn't done anything wrong; so he sat up in bed and looked at the haunt. You can see from that that he was awake."

"Yes."

"He couldn't make out either eyes or face, but the haunt came gliding in over the floor without a sound and then stopped and beckoned to him. Aasmund didn't dare do anything but follow it; he

realized that it wanted to show him something. So with the haunt before him, he went out through the kitchen and down into the cellar. There it stopped in a corner and pointed at the floor — didn't say anything, just pointed and then vanished. Aasmund heard only a kind of sigh. Then he grew frightened and ran; he hardly knew how he got back to his bed, but in the morning he had a mark on his hand where he had torn it on a nail in the night. Since then he knows that a man must have been killed in the house and that his body has been buried in the cellar at the place where the haunt pointed. Now we've got to work, Gunnar."

They worked silently for a space and dreamingly. The lapwing fluttered above them and screeched: i-reh, i-reh. Tiu, tiu, sang the starfinch. The wagtail hopped about and chirped; the stonechat scuttled along a stone wall, bobbed and chattered. And above them was the singing clangor of the larks.

Soon Jorina had started another story. "My mother told me something she had heard of old Vidkunn in the Ramstad hills. Once a whole troupe of gypsies came there, and there was an old woman with the troupe, withered and crooked and yellow as horn. This old woman sat on a chair in the corner and kept on sighing heavily, 'Aa ja,' she said, 'aa ja.'

"'What are you sighing that way for?' the housewife asked.

"'Oh,' said the old woman, 'if you're going to lose your breath soon, you take deep ones.'

"That same evening the gypsy troupe went on over the hills. No one saw them again until the next

day, and then they were at Vea way up in Ness County. And then they didn't have any old woman with them."

"Perhaps she's the one that's buried on the Heialand marsh. But the gypsies couldn't have killed her; they'd have been arrested."

"No one knows about gypsies. My uncle Aasmund says that they bury old people alive when they get tired of them. The gypsies are just like the Free Masons; they do just what they want. They have sold themselves to the Devil so that no one can touch them."

They heard shouting; it was Serina calling them home to the afternoon meal. They looked at one another and Gunnar grew pale. They had done almost nothing the whole day. What would they say when his father questioned them?

One pleasure awaited them — his father had not yet come home; and on the grass between the house and the barn a gypsy troupe was sprawled out. Perhaps that will make Father forget to ask about the work, thought Gunnar. These gypsies were well known here. The little one dressed in blue with the pitch black tufts of hair, the long, golden-brown face and the queer eyes that one seldom saw was Tomas, Gypsy Tomas, the head of the troupe. He sat hammering on a pan so that the tassel on his hat danced. The others were idle. Gunhild, his wife, sat opposite him on a stool, smoking a clay pipe. Beside her on the ground sat a young, freckled woman with her knitting. Great black Olav Didricksen, Gunhild's brother, lay stretched out full length

on the sward. Around them a flock of youngsters played, howling with glee like little wolves.

Tomas was a comb-maker and tinsmith, and could also make slaies and fish hooks. He earned so much with his work that with what his wife and the others begged, they could get along without stealing. That was the best way for several reasons, Tomas declared. In the first place, the sheriffs had become pretty clever lately, and it wasn't so easy to get away with stolen things. Then again Tomas was a book-learned and wise man and did not want a thief's reputation. No one should say that Tomas Fredericksen stole from him, and no one would have to lock up his house against *his* troupe because he was afraid for his silver spoons. Then his dear son Carolus Magnus should never be ashamed of his father for stealing. If anybody said to him, "Your father is a gypsy," then he could lift his head and answer truly and righteously, "But my father is an honest man."

Tomas was an unusual type of gypsy. He had read all the good old books of wisdom: Saxo Grammaticus, Olger the Dane, Karl Magnus, and the Bible, Lars Linderoth and Knud Spodervoll. He had been confirmed, with a fair knowledge of Christian dogma, in a jail in Christiansand; they had thought of baptizing him but hardly dared, since it was probable that he had been baptized as a child some place up in Sæterdalen. It was in jail that he had first had the desire to read and think, and since then he had read much and thought a great deal, and discovered many remarkable things in his long wanderings. He was one of the few that really understood

the prophets well, and he perhaps knew what was the sin against the Holy Ghost, but he never dared tell anyone.

Gypsy Tomas knew something about everything, but he was especially learned in all that was secret or mysterious. His knowledge of the hill people and the gnomes he based upon a passage in the Scriptures, the First Book of Moses, 2, 23, where Adam says of Eve: "This time it is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone." Why did Adam say, "this time"? Well, he'd had one wife before, but she had been of another sort from Adam and so God had seen that they wouldn't get on well together. He had cast her and her children down into the earth and there they had lived since, a family unto themselves. This had happened before Adam's fall; thus we could see that the gnomes were free from all sin. From this, too, came their power of being invisible. There were many more of them than we thought, and many a time they went about amongst us. They had their churches and ministers as we did, but since they were free from sin, they needed only the Old Testament.

Many wonderful and unbelievable things had happened since the creation of the world, and they became no whit the less wonderful when Tomas told about them. He had been in doubt whether he should believe several of the stories of Karl Magnus; he thought that they were at variance with God's purposes, but finally he had come to the point where he believed them anyway. What had brought him to that decision was the closing words in the book. They went thus: "Whoever believes this or

disbelieves it, does not sin therewith." Those words could not be there if there were any lies in the book, for there is no doubt that you sin when you believe something that is not true.

He knew about the five continents: Europe, Asia, America, Egypt, and Orania or New Holland. He had heard it ventured that the earth was round, but did not believe it. He did not think that that idea was in accord with God's Word, nor with one's reason either. Then too, Knud Spodervoll said that the earth was flat, and Luther, too, who was a man well versed in God's wonders. Tomas had his explanations of the eclipses of the sun and moon, but he could not come at the reasons for the waxing and waning of the moon — that was one of the great mysteries which, as sinners, we were not permitted to understand. One of the greatest signs and proofs of God's wisdom, however, was that if one looked closely on the face of the moon, he could see Adam and Eve there with the Tree of Knowledge between them; they had been placed there after death to remind all people to the end of time of the Fall. God in His wisdom had seen that the children of men would profit by having this reminder before their eyes, especially at night when the old Adam was worst.

Today Tomas was in a very troubled mood about his son Carolus Magnus. Carolus had inherited from his father a ready mind and high genius, and now wanted to change his way of living, to become a worthy citizen. Times were getting worse and more difficult for wanderers now; so if he could get along in any other way, he would be better

off. At first Carolus had been herdsboy for Simon Ramstad, and there had shown such a talent for books and learning that Parson Meier himself had taken him in. The lad had been confirmed when he was thirteen and a half years old.

The parson had hoped for great things from him, but he realized that here in this country his race would tell against him; so he had determined that Carolus should be a missionary and go out to Zulu-land. "Just the thing! Just the thing!" said Parson Meier, and he had begun to instruct Carolus in the Bible and Christian history. Carolus, however, had neither the desire nor the head for such wisdom; he intended to fulfill an ambition to go to sea when he grew up. With that decision he had returned to Simon Ramstad's, but they had no use for him now, and his parents were in great distress and bewilderment as to what they should do with him. Then Tomas' helpmeet Gunhild had a brilliant idea: they could try Enok Haave with the boy. Enok was a holy man; he could not deny them if he wanted to live according to the Word. And if he got harsh with the boy, Carolus was not the person to be abused. There might be something to gain from it, Gunhild hinted. "Don't you know, you fool, that there are some little girls there? Maybe a wedding and a baby might come of it. Haven't things just as crazy happened before? And Carolus is a good-looking fellow. When your grandmother hooked a farmer's son in Vardal, your son can do just as well at Haave, Father."

Gypsy Tomas had to laugh and praise his wife

for her deep insight in such matters, and he finally came to the decision to try Enok anyway.

The problem now was to attack Enok in the right manner, for a peasant is prouder than a parson, and Enok was a more stubborn man than the owner of Ramstad. The best way would be to use all the tricks of cunning and book-learning, for Enok himself was a learned man, and when he saw that the gypsy was equally at home in the Scriptures — for Tomas could find some subject to make his point in — then he might change his mind about Tomas and his family, and think more highly of Carolus.

At last Tomas had got hold of an argument that he knew would have weight with Enok, something that Parson Meier had said — that with God's help and according to Eilert Sundt's plan * he could have house and home if he so wished. "It won't be so long before I'll have a piece of land if that is what separates gypsy and Christian folk."

* Eilert Sundt was a clergyman and pioneer in sociological studies, who especially interested himself in reclaiming the gypsies.



XII

IT had begun to grow dusk; Enok was sitting at the table eating. The gypsies came in one by one and drifted toward the corners by the stove. Tomas came last of all. "Good evening and God bless the food," he greeted them reverently.

He was short and lithe-limbed, as pliant and lissome in his walk and carriage as a wild man who has never known heavy work. He seemed to be playing with his limbs when he walked, to throw them about where he willed; his little head nodded and swung on its thin, brown stalk of a neck and tipped from one shoulder to the other caressingly. His face, with good enough features, still had the gypsy cast, shy, wild, untrustworthy, quick-shifting from the utmost solemnity to wild laughter. When he talked with worthy folk, however, he was most punctilious in manner and in speech.

He sat down on a chair in front of the stove, and began to talk at length and in the most pompous manner. It was hard to see what he was driving at; he began with the weather and God's wonders in Nature. His voice was smooth and soft, but it ran up and down the scale with an almost unbelievable range. He was pleased with himself and his talk, and he worked forward toward his goal with well-chosen words and periodic expectorations when he

had made a point. (He chewed tobacco like a billy goat.) He liked best to discuss the higher things; then his head rose on its stalk like an empty seed pod, his shoulders twitched, and his eyes glowed; his face set in stern, hard lines, and his meaning grew ever the more complicated. He had found expressions for all his many thoughts and ideas, but in words that hardly anyone except himself could understand. With them and with his knowledge of the law and of the Bible and many other curious things, he had driven many a wise man into a corner, even the parson himself.

Enok answered shortly; he could not stand gypsies, for they were not like other people. There was something about them in appearance and at heart that made them almost unendurable—something loose and smooth, brown and slippery, something of the snake and the eel, sometimes something clean devilish. There was no honor in them, no dependability; everything about them was false and lying and mysterious, and about them was an odor, a whiff of bestial and terrible lusts and sins, as if in some way they were in league with Satan. Tomas was far from being the worst, but he was of the same blood; his slippery tongue could utter none save lying words. It was almost sacrilegious to hear him discuss holy things; in his mouth they were defiled. Sometimes Enok thought that gypsies could not have souls; that they were nothing but clothed animals, apes and foxes in human guise, half men, half animals, from dark places. They could not talk like proper folk; one could pick one out even if he barely opened his mouth. And what they said when

they jabbered to one another in the gypsy talk, only the Devil himself could know; something terrible it would have to be.

Tomas, with many gesticulations and bowings and scrapings, had now got as far as the great subject of the Resurrection. "And now I want to ask you a question, Enok, if you won't take it ill. It is a wonderful and mysterious thing that I have often pondered upon. In the Scriptures in many places, it says that we shall arise on the Last Day from our graves just as we are now, in all ways and matters the same and with every organ and limb. That's something that you can't deny, my esteemed and God-fearing Enok. But then Jesus says clearly in another place that in Heaven there'll be no giving and taking in marriage, but that we shall all be as brothers and sisters. Now comes the problem. We shall have all our limbs at the Resurrection, but shall we have the marriage limb, since according to the very words of Jesus we shall not marry? Can you solve that riddle for me, Enok?" He spat and looked cunningly at him. The gypsies in the corner had trouble in keeping from laughing out loud.

"Our Lord can loose that knot," said Enok shortly, "but it would be better for you who are so well versed in the Bible to think on another text — that 'whosoever will not work, neither shall he eat.'"

With those words Enok left himself wide open. Tomas could truly say — and all the other gypsies could support him in the statement — that he had just now come from his work in his honorable trade of tinsmith. Here, before he had even hoped for it, Tomas found such a good straight path leading to

his goal that he let drop all his preparation. "We all work enough, and in all humility and earnestness," he said. "And we would work more if worthy people would give us work. But now, my kindly and most honorable Enok, I want first of all to petition you for my little son. I have. . . ."

With many sweet words and with unbelievable twistings and bowings and scrapings, he at last got out what he wanted Enok to do for Carolus Magnus, "who had no head for the book-learning that the parson had been forcing on him," and who, "in all humility, had never hoped to attain such a high goal," but who "prayed every evening on bare knees that it might be granted him to come to a pious man of God like Enok Haave" so that he could learn to "work with the soil and earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, according to the word of God, and His command in the First Book of Moses, the second chapter."

Then Gunhild tuned up, and flattery and praise rained and hailed down over Enok and the boy. Her voice rose and rose, and the flattery grew more and more fulsome. After a time Enok paid no attention to the words; he merely sat trying to think of some text from the Scriptures whereby he could silence them and close the matter. Suddenly, however, he felt the Holy Spirit bear witness within him. Here was a "Jesus child." This was the sacrifice that God had craved of him—just this, the worst thing that he could think of, the bitterest and sourest cup that could be offered to his flesh and blood; that was what the Father demanded.

He got up from the table and groped for

words. He finally said quickly and shortly, "God wills that I help the boy. But if he comes here, then he must follow the ways of the house and accustom himself to the Word and our work. I will have no folly here and none of your gypsy ways. If he will accept these conditions, send him here and we shall see how much God will help us."

He left the room abruptly, the gypsies at his heels with wild protestations of thanks and gratitude.

Two days later Tomas and Gunhild came back with Carolus Magnus. He was a thin, small, graceful little person with dark, unquiet eyes and quick, shy movements, as light and soundless on his feet as a Halling man. When he walked, it looked as if there were no weight to him; he could not keep step with his parents; they went too slowly. In his little, round, brown face, however, there was an almost laughable solemnity and gravity; he was a smaller edition of Gypsy Tomas. He bore himself with such a grown-up air and talked so wisely that Anna almost softened toward him because he was so different from the other children. Though he was healthy enough, one could see that he had grown up like a bird or a wild animal; many generations of sun and winds had touched his blood; he was quick as an otter. Beside Carolus, Gunnar looked pale, even though he was stouter and firmer in build.

He greeted Anna politely as his "new mother". He hoped with God's help so to behave that she would never regret her good will toward him. (Gypsy cunning, gypsy cunning, with sweet mouth

and slippery tongue!) Anna had to force herself to take him by the hand and say welcome to him. Uff! What a little, soft, weak woman's hand it was!

No less politely he greeted his new father. He could truthfully say that his intentions were good. "And so you must bear with me if at first I'm not good for much."

"If you learn to turn to the Lord in your youth, Carolus, and pray to Him, the rest will take care of itself," answered Enok.

Then Gypsy Tomas made a speech and finally Gunhild—endless admonitions for the boy and endless praises for these "pious and worthy people." Their voices rose almost to screeches so that one had to put his fingers in his ears. Their little eyes glowed and darted; and about their mouths lay the mark of the gypsy—a loose, mysterious smile, hardly perceptible. Their talk ended in a few words in the gypsy speech, that were spoken in the same harsh, high voice as the rest. "And so I hope to God, Carolus, that you will remain a true Romany soul and not let the peasant here make a fool of you, nor cheat you, nor beat you. If things don't suit you, then run away and come back to your father and mother, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen. Good-bye now."

That last was hard enough for Enok to stand, though he did make a mental note of one thing that Tomas had said.

"Perhaps it may turn out so," said Tomas, "that I can give up my wandering life in my old age. Long has it been my hope and desire, and now only this last winter I myself talked the matter over with

the parson, and he said, 'If you can get such a man as Enok Haave to support you in that wish of yours,' he said, 'it won't perhaps be impossible for you, because Enok Haave,' he said, 'is, after me, the man who has the most to say among the Commissioners of the Poor.' " Gunhild winked at her husband — that was well said.

"Why! The parson couldn't have said that?" Enok said complacently.

"Those are the words he used, and I am not the man to spread lies and falsehoods abroad, for I know that in the Scriptures it says: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.' "

Enok was amazed to hear such praise from such an unexpected quarter as the parson. Well, Meier was a kindly man. He promised, when he had full information on the matter, to help Tomas as far as it was within his power. Perhaps God would make use of him to accomplish His purpose. The gypsies finally left, with blessings and prayers and full sacks, and Enok felt strengthened by the new responsibility that was laid upon him.

That God approved his action was soon manifest. Carolus was so obedient and pleasant that it was good to have him around; he could, in fact, be a model for poor Gunnar, who heard Carolus's praise early and late. "Pattern yourself after Carolus," Enok advised him all too often.

He could not understand Gunnar who formerly had been so quick and alert to do his bidding — it almost seemed as if he had been made over in the last two winters. He was stubborn and self-willed in everything, small and great. Toward his father

he displayed only indifference, resistance, almost hate; he went about dour and sullen, so that it was hard to get a word out of him. His father could not understand it; he thought that it must be the Devil in the boy—now that God stood so near him. The devils in the Gospels had always raged worst when Jesus stood before them.

Carolus was another sort entirely. All Enok's dealings with him were easy and smooth. He was quick and gentle in his answers so that it was sheer pleasure to talk with him. He could ask questions himself, too, talk of spiritual things in such a manner that Enok at times recalled the story of the young Jesus in the temple. Now and again his gypsy blood showed, but he had been with farming folk enough so that he had sloughed off the worst habits.

He had no appetite for work, however; he preferred to run errands or act as herdsboy or do small odd jobs. But then he had come to Enok to learn how to work, and that was enough. If the will was there, and God was with him, that would serve as a start. Enok prayed for wisdom and patience to fulfill this special work so that all the traits of gypsy and loafer that were in the lad might be washed away and purged from him.

He did not at first dare to be strict with Carolus; he hoped to make progress by slow degrees; if he was too harsh at first, the boy would run away. For the present Gunnar could turn to a little harder, and then they would see if a sense of honor would not waken in Carolus so that he would not let Gunnar, who was younger, put him to shame.

Consequently, Enok was more strict with

Gunnar than ever before. Gunnar had to do everything. "You, Gunnar, can clean the stable." "You, Gunnar, had better carry in the peat turves." But to the gypsy he was as forbearing as he could be. "Perhaps, Carolus, you would like to help Gunnar a little." "Carolus, you might go out and look after the horses." It was disgusting; Gunnar spat scornfully. That wheedling tone, that unctuous politeness, fairly stank in his nostrils. At first Gunnar had been afraid of the gypsy; gypsies were heathen, Jorina had said. But his fright had turned to hate. Carolus flattered his father so outrageously, and cringed before him, and talked so hypocritically and piously, and lied with such assurance; then, when he was out from under Enok's eye, he merely walked about with his hands in his pockets. He never was blamed, and as for the whip — Ha! Give a gypsy boy a beating? No, just a couple of mild rebukes in that wheedling tone: "It's amazing, Carolus, that you're not finished yet, when you're such a clever lad. Gunnar will help you a little." Naturally it had to be Gunnar; Gunnar could do anything. And the gypsy did not have to wear leather breeches, either.

Gunnar went about brooding over the injustice like a grown-up; the only person who had any consideration for him was his mother. She timidly supported him and helped him when she had an opportunity. Things had improved lately; when his father was in town and his mother asked Gunnar to go to the country store at Aase with a measure of butter or some product of the farm that he could exchange for buns and coffee, Gunnar went willingly enough. He knew that he would get a bun himself when he

got home. He took a special delight in lying to the gypsy, for Carolus was not to know anything about it, either.

One day in the fall, however, something unexpected happened. Gunnar had been to the store. When he went into the pantry for his bun, he found Carolus there before him. Gunnar went to his mother and told her that Carolus had taken a bun. His mother had scolded him, was almost angry with him. "You're too jealous of Carolus, Gunnar; he's been a good boy today. Go back to the pantry; you'll get a bun, too." She added in a whisper, "You must be friends with him." Gunnar stood there bewildered. He could not understand what had happened. Ashamed and wondering, he went back into the pantry. "Well, what did you get for your skins?" asked Carolus.

Later, on the same day, they all went out to the barn to play; they were to have a brief vacation while Enok was away. Gunnar was so happy at that, that he forgot what had happened, especially since Carolus turned out to be so funny. He could mimic all sorts of things: he was a wild man and made them almost sick with laughter. Then he told them stories, much better stories than Jorina had told. After he had told two stories, however, he grew bored with them. It was worth while being good friends with him to make him tell more.

"Now I'll be a parson," said Carolus. He got Jorina's petticoat for a gown and began to preach. At first he was serious. "My fellow Christians," he said, "we must not be so light-minded; we must remember that we all must die." Soon, however, he

slipped over into the wildest nonsense. "Before we die, though, we must marry, and now how shall a godly man take a wife unto himself? That I'll show to you." He went a-wooing to Serina and grimaced and gesticulated so that they all had to laugh even though Gunnar did not like it. Serina was pleased, nevertheless, for she giggled and laughed continuously. "Now you must say, 'Yes,'" said Carolus. "That's the next step."

"Yes," said Serina and laughed.

"Now what shall the godly man do with his wife? Well, I'll show you." He tried to put his arms around Serina's neck, but she screamed and ran off.

Anna had come out to the barn to bundle up hay for the cows. She stood listening to them for a while and then came forward. "Carolus," she said sharply. They all shook in their shoes and then scampered off. "By rights I should tell Enok about this," she said gravely.

Then Carolus went up to her and said in his most casual tone of voice, "No, don't do that; it really isn't worth while for Father to know too much of what goes on here when he's away." Anna gave Carolus an evil look, and Gunnar shivered; now he understood everything.

"Well, we'll let it go for this time," said his mother, and left them.

After that, Gunnar made friends with Carolus as soon as he could.



XIII

THE air grew sharper, and the crops ripened. The potato vines lost their beautiful blue-veined and cream-yellow blossoms, and the potatoes began to set. The lapwing grew silent, assembled in flocks, and then one morning were gone. On the pale, shorn fields the starlings flocked together with skirling chatter that could be heard far in the distance. The flocks whirled into the air, settled into a mountain ash and ate the red berries.

Soon the fall harvesting began, and laughter and talk resounded from all the fields round about. Then there was the last great effort of the season — the digging of the potatoes and the planting of the winter rye.

Summer had ended for another year. They put away all the tools and driving gear, and dragged all the gates and hurdles into shelter. The cattle were still out and wandered listlessly about the fields near the house and plucked at the stubble, but they all drifted to the fence nearest the house walls and stood shivering, longed for the stable, dreamed of the peace of winter and filled troughs. A dank wind whistled about the eaves and walls, heavy with the rains of autumn. Above them the sky stretched gray and depressing, washed by the heavy moving clouds.

Enok was the only one who had not got his

potatoes up — he had so few people to help him that he was always late — but at last there was only one strip left on the river meadow which was so small that Carolus and Gunnar could finish with it by evening. Enok would plow, and Jorina could help Anna with the churning. Gunnar and Carolus worked for all they were worth. "Never a word now!" They would feel so fine when all the fall work was done. The work, however, was stiffer than they had expected, and every now and then Carolus took a rest.

"Awful work," grumbled Gunnar. He was fumbling at the wet soil with hands as red as lobster claws.

"Right you are," said Carolus. "I think that I'll go off to sea anyway."

"I think that I will too, but you mustn't tell anyone about it."

"Nor you either."

"Certainly not. What was that?"

They heard wild, harsh cries, a confused screaming of frightened voices high in the air. It was the gray geese. Wavering in the wind they bore south in a great, uneven wedge.

"Now they're on their way. Where do you think they'll go?"

"They're going to Arabia," said Carolus.

"I wish I were going with them. Just think, if you could change yourself into a bird and fly away with them."

They stared after the flock that slowly vanished in the gray clouds.

"Where is Arabia?" asked Gunnar.

"Arabia?" Carolus was as pompous in tone as

his father. "Arabia," he chanted, "lies seven times seven days' journey south of us, south of the sea and south of Flanders and south of Spain, and south of the Emperor and the Pope, south where the blackamoors live."

"It must be a long way off."

"And the king there is the great Caliph Hadonald Raskji, and he lives in a palace of pure gold. The pillars in that palace are of marble and ivory. The queens and all the people in the palace are clad in silk and purple, and in the middle of the palace is a fountain of jasper and emerald, but from it plays not water but glittering pearls. Hadonald Raskji himself sits on a high throne of beaten gold with a sceptre of diamonds and jasper and amethyst, and shines like a sun above his kingdom." Carolus had forgotten where he was; his dark eyes shone with his dream.

"We ought to be there," murmured Gunnar.

"I'd like to be the meanest slave there," said Carolus, "for the meanest slave there is finer than — than — the prefect here. And he has only to swing a censer before Hadonald Raskji and play upon the lute and bear the train of the queen, but there must be five hundred other slaves to help him, for the train would reach from here to Ramstad."

"Oh!"

"And every slave has a companion as young and beautiful as the most beautiful rose, a companion that shines like the sun and has eyes like stars, for only those who are as beautiful as princesses can serve in such a palace. They sing beautiful songs and play upon the lute and the cithern, and in the evening

they wander in the great groves of high palm trees and cedars of Lebanon, each with his companion, and love one another and kiss. And when they have wandered enough, then they go into the palace and lie down upon soft silken sheets and sleep side by side till Hadonald Raskji gets up and rings the great bell that is heard all over Arabia."

"I wouldn't want any of that stuff," growled Gunnar. He had no liking for the picture.

"Well, you know, nobody is going to force it on you."

"Shall we go?" asked Gunnar.

"Yes, sometime, but it's a long way. We must first go over the sea, and then many hundreds of miles up the Rhine. Then we come to Burgundy and Flanders, and then to the Roman Emperor, and then we must go through the kingdom of the Pope and then through Turkeyland."

"Where they eat men?"

"Yes, but they won't eat us because we'll say we are pilgrims on our way to the Holy Sepulchre, and then they won't touch us."

"Whew, I'd be afraid."

"There's no need to be afraid, for they're sensible enough not to kill anybody except knights and warriors."

Carolus spaded a little, but he was so wrapped in his dream that he did little.

"Why couldn't we run away?" asked Gunnar.

"We will — some dark night when everybody is asleep, and no one knows; we'll get up and take with us what we'll need, clothes and food, and gold and silver, and go over the hills down to the sea."

Suddenly Carolus became very busy and began to dig so that the earth flew. "Quick," he whispered, "your father's coming. Get to work. Now who was it," he continued loudly, "who lived for forty days and forty nights without food? Can you tell me that? Oh, here comes Father!" he cried in his blithest tones, as if surprised. "Now you must not be hard on us, Father," he continued. "I had got to talking with Gunnar about a Biblical question and we clean forgot. . . ."

"I'll have to help you," said Enok shortly. "Remember that everything has its time, Carolus."

Gunnar was having an easier time now; Carolus was clever enough in dealing with his father so that they could do almost what they wanted to. Gunnar and Carolus were kept together on the pleasanter tasks, and cleaning the stable and such dirty jobs had been shifted over to Jorina. Even if the work itself was not pleasant, as when they had to scrape skins or tan them, it was always better when Carolus was around, for he told stories or found something to talk about so that the time went faster than they expected. Usually Gunnar did most of the work, but he did not mind that.

Anna soon saw that Gunnar had found a helper in the pantry, and finally she had to lock up almost everything. She hid most of the butter so that they did not eat very much, and their thefts were not so noticeable. Sometimes, though, Enok wondered that there was so little butter this year, and then she blamed the hay; it was so washed out and bleached in such a rainy summer as they had had, she said. Enok shook his head. It was not the hay

but the Hand of God. There wasn't anyone there, though, that was . . . too long in the fingers? "No, I don't believe so; I'm keeping an eye on both Jorina and Carolus, but they are honest enough as far as that goes." Anna was red in the face.

"Well, thanks be to God for that," said Enok.

Gunnar had to make some sort of payment for all the stories that Carolus told him. Carolus made him give him souvenirs or trade away his possessions for mere trash. Thus Gunnar traded away his knife for a penholder and a paper with a picture of the Virgin Mary on it. He regretted that trade later on. Worst of all was when he gave Carolus one of the old gold rings of his mother's — some that had been put away in a drawer in the *escritoire*. He grew frightened and went weeping to Carolus and asked him to give him back the ring so that he would not have to tell about it. Carolus laughed. "It was only in fooling," he said. "I don't want anything of yours that you can't give me with a good will," Gunnar got the ring and after that thought better of Carolus. They often went out and looked at the old things in the *escritoire*; Carolus thought they were beautiful, he said.

They did not really become friends, though, till they had stood shoulder to shoulder in a crisis.

Gunnar owned one thing that he hid from Carolus, and that was a little purse with twelve and a half skillings in it. Gunnar was afraid that if Carolus saw it, he would want it; so he hid it in the top of the blue chest of his mother's in the spare room. And then he forgot about it.

One Sunday afternoon Carolus and he were in

the room with the chest. "What's in it?" asked Carolus.

"Only clothes," said Gunnar, and opened the lid, remembering nothing. Carolus began to poke and pry about, and then Gunnar remembered too late; Carolus had found the purse.

"What's this? A purse full of skillings! Is it yours?"

Gunnar tried to take the purse away from him. "Yes, I got it from Trond Painter, and I'm going to use it to buy me a new cap with."

"Don't be afraid; I won't take it away from you," laughed Carolus. "One, two, three, twelve and one half skillings. Do you think that you can get a cap for that? Hardly. My mother will get you a cap, though, a brand new one with a gold cord about it and a feather in it, one she'll get from Sweden, see? Shall I give her the money? And then you'll get your cap in the spring." The end of it all was that Carolus got the purse.

Then one day a man came to collect some money from his father. They had it all except eight skillings. Then Anna said, "Gunnar, can't you lend your father your money for a while?"

Gunnar grew cold. Carolus was out somewhere and Gunnar had no idea where the purse was. "That's an idea," said Enok.

"The purse is out in the drawer in the blue chest," said Anna. Enok went out to find it.

The room swam before Gunnar's eyes. He realized what was going to happen. A great weight grew in his breast and he felt like crying. His father

came back. "Somebody who knows where it is had better get it."

Anna was nursing little Paul; so she could not go. "You know where the purse is, Gunnar. Why don't you go?"

"Hurry up now," said Enok.

Gunnar by now had calculated that if he lied he would be whipped, but if he told the truth, he would be whipped and he would also be at odds with Carolus. He sat between two fires, but he thought that the best way out was to lie.

"Well?" his father questioned. Gunnar mumbled something but could not speak. "What's that you're saying?" asked his father.

"I don't know where — the purse is."

"What, you say you don't know where it is?" Enok stared at him so that he cringed.

They sent to the next farm for the skillings, and as long as the stranger was there, Gunnar was safe. He sat by the dining table as blue and pale as a corpse. His ears rang. If only Carolus would come! Perhaps they would have to go to Storbrekke for the money. Now Carolus was coming. No, it was only Serina with the skillings. The man got his money and left. Now there was no help; no help. . . .

His father came over to him. The room loomed enormous before him, dipped to one side. Gunnar could not stand it any longer but began to cry.

"Now, Gunnar, tell me about the purse." His father stood across the table directly opposite him. Gunnar cringed and tried to answer. "Well? Well?"

"I've lost the purse," screamed Gunnar, beside himself with crying.

"God help you, Gunnar," cried his mother.

"Lost it?" roared his father. "How did you do that?"

Now he would have to find some way out.

"Where did you lose it?" His father was fearfully stern.

"In the barn."

"How did the purse come in the barn when it was in the chest?"

Gunnar wept and thought, thought and wept.

"I wanted to . . . booh hooh."

"Well?" Enok bent over him and took him by the shoulder.

"I wanted to look — at the skillings . . . booh. . . ."

"And so you took the purse from the chest?"

"Bo-o-o-h y-yes."

"And sat and gloated over those poor skillings as if they were the golden calf."

"Y-y-yes."

"And there you lost them and then went about amongst us and said never a word, and kept the whole matter hidden from us. Now I'm going to give you a lesson so that I shall not go the way of the high priest Eli. . . ."

Gunnar was beaten as he had never been beaten before: one blow laid on after the other. He twisted and writhed as if he would wriggle out of his skin, and screamed through the tightened muscles of his throat till he sounded like nothing human. Anna hardened herself; he had earned this beating. To think of his throwing away money. But this was too

terrible; Enok would kill him. "No, no, Enok. Good God, Enok."

But in that wild howling, she could not hear her own voice. Finally Gunnar got loose from his father's grip, scrabbled off across the floor on all fours, racked with sobs, almost speechless and senseless. Anna shuddered. "You ought to use common sense."

"It's better for me to punish him," said Enok, "than that he should fall into the hands of the Living God."

Gunnar caught up his leather breeches and edged out through the bedroom, through the kitchen and the back door, over the yard to the barn, shaken all the way with sobs that must not be heard too much. He did not feel safe there and fled to the sheep barn, where he hid himself in the darkest corner and let the tears have full sway. Dear God, how his bottom burned. He howled and howled till he almost frightened himself.

Carolus came sauntering in from the house lot with his hands in his pockets, whistling and careless. When he came up to the barn, he heard through the sighing of the wind an unusual howling. What was that? He stopped and listened. Was it a person? He listened and pried about, finally came into the sheep barn where he found Gunnar. He soon had the whole story.

Then his light gypsy heart was so moved that he rushed in at once after the purse and came out and gave it to Gunnar. "You poor fellow, to suffer that way for me. It's too bad that I wasn't at home."

He stroked Gunnar's cheek and comforted him. "There, there, Gunnar, don't cry any more. You'll get your beautiful cap anyway; I'll talk to my mother about it. And if she can't get a cap, then I'll get one when I grow up. That's not so many years from now, you know. It was fine of you to be so loyal to me and not mix me up in this. That was well done, Gunnar. Come! Now we'll go in. There's no need of being afraid when I'm with you."

Gunnar went with him after a time. "And now you must not tell your father that you have found the purse; and so you can buy what you want with the money. Isn't that true?"

"Ye-e-s," sobbed Gunnar. He smiled wanly through the spasms of his weeping.

At that moment he forgot that Carolus was a gypsy. Carolus was the finest lad on earth.



XIV

“YOU talk so much about self-denial,” Anna said to him one evening after they had gone to bed, “that it’s queer that you keep this up.”

She would speak out this once, whether it did any good or not; but as soon as she had said the words, she regretted them. He was still for a long time. The silence roared in her ears; she heard her words again and again, and they sounded more and more unkindly and evil. And he was lying there listening to them and thinking about them. She felt hot with embarrassment; would she ever learn to hold her tongue?

“You know well,” said he finally, “what God said to Adam: ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’ And we should do his will in all things. We must only pray that we do it with the right mind and from no lust of the flesh.”

She had no need to have feared; he had an answer ready — Bible texts for everything, even if it were ever so crazy. If she told him that she could not stand it, that he was destroying her with work and travail. . . . “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord.” It would rain texts — and he would always find some that supported his view.

She could not understand him; she did not think

that he lived so fully according to the Word in all things. He talked of being humble and unworthy in our own sight, but that humility and sense of unworthiness she did not notice in him. Everything that he did was right; every whim that he had was the will of God. If the Bible said, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands," it likewise said, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." That, though, he never remembered — only those things that he could fit into his scheme of things.

He had not the least thought for her. Not once had he worried about her condition. They could easily manage to live like other people, but he would not. . . . Perhaps it was his intention to make an end of her; that was it. Now that her dowry was gone, she could follow it; he would rather have a new wife that would be even more pliable to his will. Perhaps he was not so crazy as he appeared. It was strange how closely his holiness ran with his earthly good; it seemed as if God's will was always the cheapest . . . except in his dealings with the poor perhaps. He was ashamed to acknowledge that it was miserliness, and so he had hit upon the solution of calling it God's will.

Uff, she must not think so evil, even though she was angry at times. Nevertheless, she was willing to wager that it wasn't always desire for God; true Christianity could not be so hard. And here she was going about arguing with herself as to whether she had done right to deceive him in little ways. If he was so unreasonable, he could take the results on himself. She would help the children as much as she

could, and give them as good food as she could. It was terrible that she felt too weak to really oppose him. If she were like Per's Inger....

She lay and nursed her anger till she had worked herself into a fit of chills. That was a help when she needed sleep so much. Oh, she was so tired; it seemed as if she could hardly hold together. Every morning she was up at dawn, toiled and moiled the whole day long. There were a thousand things that she had to do without help — the house and the barn to look after, and a child to nurse. Serina was willing, but she could not do much but tend the baby, and Jorina could not even darn a sock. She was a queer child — could not learn anything. She merely dragged herself around and scratched her head. It was more trouble to keep her clean than it was help to have her around. Anna would be glad enough if she could get rid of her, but ... she did not dare to mention that to anyone. His treatment of his "Jesus children" was out of all reason; his own children he treated like stepchildren beside them. They knew how to behave in front of him, the little tramps. Worst of all was that Jorina was filling Gunnar with all sorts of stories and nonsense so he was half-crazy with them — afraid of the dark and cowardly. Now he had got such a liking for the stuff she fed him, that he did not care whether he saw anybody besides these gypsies, who would fill him with stories and old women's tales. Carolus was the worse of the two, but he had such power in the house. Oh, if she could only get something on him sometime so that she could get rid

of him. But getting something on a gypsy was like trying to get hold of an eel.

She was helpless. She had no time with her children; so they could learn all sorts of evil things. How could she get a free time when she was on the move from morning till night? At night when she tried to sleep, there was the baby, or heavy thoughts that robbed her of her rest. Even if she had time to sit still a little while she was so exhausted that she could do nothing. And he had taken on himself the job of holding school for them — a fine business, that. That is the way it would have to turn out when he would not listen to advice. She did not know what would happen to the children; she could not help them; she had to be content with being a servant in the house and doing the things that had to be done. And for all that she did, there was much left to do; on every side were things half done or undone; the house was in disorder; the children were dirty; the place looked so awful sometimes that she felt ashamed. But “as long as we keep our hearts clean and pure. . . .” Uh!

Why couldn’t he even use common sense — as soon as she was through nursing one child, there was another coming. And she was getting so weak. The last time she had come through all right, but what about the next time? Terror seized her. “Oh, God,” she prayed, “let me have no more, in Christ’s name, Amen.”

No, she did not mean that; she did not mean that. She knew that she must not complain, since she had such fine healthy children. No, she did not complain. Suppose something had been the matter with

any of them either in mind or body? There were enough people who knew how that felt. No, she would not complain. If they only grew up as well as it looked as if they would, she would be content. It was only that sometimes she grew indignant. . . .

She lay listening to the even breathing from the cradle and the little beds, heard the rhythms of sweet, light sleep till she grew quiet. She would let Him rule and hope that things would come out all right. There would come a time when Enok would regret. . . .

Outside the wind had shifted into the south; she could tell by the sound. The house was like a wind organ on which every wind played its tune — from the high howl of the northwest wind to the deadened sighing of the rain-bearing wind from the south, she knew them all. Ah yes, the world was stormy and bitter. Ah, God be with us!

With a deep, tired sigh she dropped off to sleep. When little Paul wakened during the night, he had to cry a long time before he woke her.



XV

IT was a beautiful, fine Sunday in February. There was a mild frost, mild air and pale sunshine from an overcast sky. In his house Enok was reading from the Bible. His blissful smile was not evident today; there was rather something gray and tired about his face.

A stifling, heavy heat from the burning peat filled the room. The floor was strewn with fresh sand. Anna was sitting in her chair by the cradle, blinking sleepily. Behind her the girls had hidden themselves. Jorina nodded by the side of the stove, and, one on either side of the green table, right under Enok's eye, sat Gunnar and Carolus; they looked as if they were listening to the texts.

On the wall by the chamber door the clock hung and ticked in its long case, tikk-tikk; tikk-tikk; heavily and sleepily. Carolus counted the strokes: one, two; three, four. He had to find something to do so that he would not fall asleep.

Gunnar was dreaming about Arabia. He would build a great house there. It would be built in such and such a way, and have so many rooms. Carolus would live with him there, and perhaps he'd take Per's children with him so that there would be enough to play trebonius. Perhaps he would marry Olina sometime. No, not that, but what Carolus was

talking about the other day — that might be fun. Carolus knew everything. He wondered who had told him. Perhaps he had seen it himself? He would ask him that evening. It was fine now that they slept together and could talk over so many things.

Enok read on and on, but there was no life in his voice; he took no joy in the words. This was one of his dark days; the sun was hidden behind the clouds, and there was darkness in his heart. But the Saving Hand held so that he did not dare feel afraid. Lately he had not remained so continuously on Tabor; was there only now and again when God wanted to show him favor? At times he went far down into the valley, he thought, and the Devil often tormented him with his tricks; his fear for the morrow got more and more hold on him. He knew, however, that now with his falling and rising again and his struggles, he was living as a Christian man should in this Vale of Tears, and so he was content. He was even glad that he was fighting the good fight, and was thought worthy to be tried with many temptations. Now if God would only help him with his household so that they, too, might come to Jesus. He thought that he was making little headway and often prayed for endurance; he worked and worked with readings and prayers, and preached the Word in and out of season. They would hear how good and comforting the Lord was till they could no longer stand aloof.

He wondered what Gunnar was thinking of now as he sat and stared straight before him with empty eyes, almost came to the point of asking him, of perhaps scaring him a little so that he would pay

attention for a while. Then they heard steps on the road. Every one awakened and looked out. Of all things, wasn't it Student Olsen who came swinging along?

Gunnar and Carolus winked at one another. He was coming here. Thank goodness!

Three hurried steps in the hallway, a knocking at the door, and in strode Olsen, tall and gaunt. He had taken off his silk hat, but even then he had to stoop. "Good day; bless the reading."

"Thank you; but you must take a chair."

Olsen pulled up his coat tails and sat down on the nearest chair. "It's fine weather." He was sober today and talked in the country dialect. He stood his hat on his knee, kept his cane in his hand; his back was as rigid as a pike. He was bald in front and long-haired in back; his face was gaunt and sharp, deeply furrowed. On one cheek was a lump that looked like a quid of tobacco. His little bluish eyes blinked steadily and often. His coat was worn glossy, his neckband was spotted, his shoes were broken and almost heelless. He was given to terrible drinking spells and was having a hard time to get along. But he was a learned man, and therefore Enok had a kind of reverence for him.

They began to talk. Gunnar and Carolus winked at one another. Carolus got up. "I'll go out and have a look at the horses," he said, and went out. Gunnar soon followed him, but left by way of the bedroom, so that his father might think that he was going out to study his lesson.

Olsen had come on business today. He wanted to know if perhaps Enok wouldn't have some use for

a tutor. "I hear you have had enough of what people here call school," he said, "and since I'm free for several weeks now, you might use me, perhaps."

"Yes," said Enok doubtfully. He knew that Olsen was dear, but since God had sent the man here, it was perhaps His will. He could combine with Per and then it would not be so dear. His own teaching was dragging, that was true. He had too little time, and then Gunnar with no desire to learn. . . . It was too bad to let him go on this way. "What do you think, Anna?"

With all her power Anna urged him to accept. Both Gunnar and Serina were behind other children of their age, and was it not wrong to let Jorina grow up with so little schooling? This last argument she thought would help, and it did. The next day Enok's children went to school, and Per's children were with them.

Gunnar was happy. Now he could wear his Sunday clothes. Now he would have some time to himself. He went wild — wrestled and fought and yelled and performed all sorts of sly tricks. He was worst of all to Olina, pulled her braids and struck her, pinched her arms and pricked her with pins, sometimes even threw her down and dragged her around by the feet. She complained to Olsen. It was queer to see him act so wild; he was worse than all the rest put together.

Except for his outbursts, things went well. Olsen was a clever schoolmaster when he was in the mood. He kept the interest of the children, and they began to make progress. He was not at all strict with them; he himself paced up and down the floor

before them and talked with them; when he saw that they were getting bored, he turned them all out. "Now you're not good for anything except playing at trebonius," he said.

Enok had rebuked him for his manner with the children; it was not right for him to punish them so little, he thought. The children liked it well enough, of course, but that was just the trouble; he should beware of what seemed so pleasant to flesh and blood. "I'll use my own method," said Olsen.

In the evenings he stayed at one of the farm-houses nearby, preferably at Helge's where he could get a drink or two. When he had drunk a little, he began to lecture, and folk collected and were amused by him. If he was really drunk, though, he began to tell of his experiences, and then no one understood him. Then Olsen grew sullen, or he sighed and became moody. "Think, here I stand, the greatest poet of Norway, and in what an environment. Ah, *quelle vie, quelle vie!* Ah! *voici un malheureux!*" Such gibberish was French, he told them. When Saturday came, he stopped at twelve o'clock and dashed off to town. He never came back before they had eaten supper, and then he was very pompous in manner. "No, thank you, nothing to eat." Poor fellow! In the evening he spoke like a city person. He paced up and down the floor with swishing coat and great strides and cleared his throat as if he wanted to say something. Then he folded his arms and straightened up. "Most worthy Enok Haave, have I ever told you of my time of visitation?"

"I could wish that you had known your time of

visitation," said Enok as he sat whittling at a spade handle.

Olsen began to pace up and down again, had hardly heard the answer. "Yes, my friend, every Paul and Peter doesn't have such a time. Not at all. A man can not be a poet if he has not at least once in his life been crazy, as the Philistines say. Well, I remember the whole thing as if it were yesterday. It was a light, bright morning and I was steaming south over the Christiania Fjord. I intended to visit a certain famous Danish nerve specialist. 'To the south, to the south like the wild gray goose,' as it says in one of my poems. As I sat by myself, suddenly this thought came to me, 'You, Ole Christian Olsen, are, politely speaking, a clod—but your soul is an outpouring, an emanation from the Source of all things, from the great Poet of all Poets.'" He stretched out an arm with twitching fingers. "And I felt God in me like a living light. Can you imagine a thing like that, Enok?"

"I have perhaps lived through something that was greater."

"Thank God that you understand me; it's blessed to be among intelligent people. Yes, that was a great time. After that I went about in a happy trance—a thin, light mist that I called the mist of the poet. And a mighty voice in me said clearly though without words: 'You have that in you which is greater than Shakespeare.' Then things began to happen to me, and next came a period which, in a subjective sense, is perhaps the most interesting that I have ever experienced. My so-called madness was really an inspired state of imagination marked by a

power of poetical creation which I have never had before or since. 'A floating cloud so light and free.' Are you listening, Enok?"

"Yes, I hear you well enough—"

"I thought at that time that the magnetic currents of the earth were the cause of the waning of our strength and the reason for death. Now those currents ceased; the earth kept its magnetism to itself and the dead came back. Space had vanished so far that I could talk to a man in Greece or Rome as easily as I could to one in my own room. When I say that I extemporized a thousand verses, I am not exaggerating. For three whole months it happened that my audience was assembled — and attentive — at eight o'clock, and from then till eleven o'clock I recited to them one verse after another. And these verses sparkled with 'esprit,' and as far as perfection of form goes, I have never since in my sane mind reached such heights, to say nothing of surpassing them."

"IIm, that . . ." began Enok, but Olsen went on as if he had not heard.

"He, he, once I persuaded myself that Goethe had said something that didn't please me, and so I began to criticize him. (Goethe is a deceased colleague of mine who lived some time ago.) Every one will recognize the injustice of the first verse:

*'Er sass ja ganz wie blind und taub
in vielen, langen Jahren . . .'*

Ah, *c'est vrai*; you don't understand German. Ah, *l'imbecile*. . . . Now you'll hear, though, what I wrote

in Norwegian; this was to Henrik Wergeland, whom I attacked for his immorality — and rightly:

"How long, Henrik . . ."

"Hm," Enok cleared his throat. "You'd better go after the hymn books, Gunnar. It's time now for us to hold prayers."

Olsen stopped and threw wide his arms. "Ye generation of vipers," he began, "guard yourselves against spiritual vanity. Beware of them that hold long prayers and say, 'Lord, Lord,' but deny Him and scorn His works and His great revelations. You know neither Goethe nor Shakespeare, and yet you would know God. Hah! Truly I say unto you, your prayers and your cry of 'Lord, Lord,' shall not help you, for you seek salvation outside yourselves where it can not be found. You asses! Nothing can save us if we can not save ourselves. Even though you believe, if your blood runs thick and heavy in your veins, your faith shall merely lead you into sickness and misery. Truly I say unto you, 'There is healing, not in your faith, but in your blood.' You fools, you speak in your ignorance of the Blood of Jesus. Don't you know that when He speaks of blood, of the saving blood, that it is of your own blood He speaks, your own fresh, red blood, for in that lies salvation, and nowhere else? There is no salvation in anything whether you call it faith or witchcraft. You shall be as those who need no healing; observe the birds of Heaven. You muttonheads, what else did Jesus teach save health and a light heart? Happiness is the best medicine, and the best medicine is the best religion. Therefore you should sing a hymn of praise to your own powers as did that holy man of

God, Pastor Zetlitz. You'll not grow in stature sitting here in these dark holes brooding over your so-called sins. Ha, ha! Sins! As if a peasant could sin! I seem to see Our Lord sitting and reckoning up all the little stupidities and vices that come from you and that you mask under the high-sounding name of sin. Ha, ha! Devil take me. You haven't enough soul, you haven't enough..."

"That'll do," Enok interrupted. "Now you show your true colors. It is written: children and drunken people can never be silent..."

"What? Did he say drunken? Does he believe then that I'm drunk? I?" Olsen straightened himself up till he was as rigid as a pole. Then he took his hat and stick and strode out. "*L'imbecile*," he cried from the doorway.

They did not see him again, but the next morning Per came down from the north after his bundle and an ort and six which Enok owed him for eight days' teaching.

That episode had got under Enok's skin. He had sinned, been unbelieving and disobedient. He had known God's will — that he should be teacher in his own house; God had commanded him to be that, clearly enough. Then he had become impatient! It had been difficult for him; he had not got along fast enough; he had had too much to do. For this doubt and disbelief of his, God had taken away His help from him as if He did not believe that he deserved it. It was with him as it had been with Peter when he walked upon the water — he had sunk as soon as he doubted. Enok, though, had not turned to God as Peter had; he had turned to Olsen.

"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm." He had not merely sinned through doubt; he had revolted. And how quick had been his fall and how sudden! He had had no inkling of it — thought that he stood in Grace as he had before — and then he was lying in the dust; he had committed the worst sin that one of God's children could commit.

The more he thought about it, the worse seemed his sin, and fear took such hold on him that he lost all peace. Now he was going to be punished. He wandered about listless and depressed; all his childlike joy had departed from him. He prayed and read half fearfully and half unwillingly; there was no help there, for God had taken away His Grace. Worldly sorrows and thoughts again had power over him, and he thought with terror how easy a time Satan would have with him if he got permission to attack him now. There were whole days when he felt himself empty of Grace and cold, so that he almost thought that the life of the spirit was extinguished in him. All he had was a yearning for God, a weak, unquiet yearning like a little, wavering flame. That was faith; he knew that, but he was without strength; no comfort and no security lay in it for him. His prayers were so weak and spiritless that he could hardly believe that they could ascend to the Throne and the Lamb.



XVI

THEY had had little hay that year and they had to eke it out with anything that they could get hold of. The bark of the ash trees was good, and so the old trees in the garden went, one by one, till finally there were only two left: one that was nearly dead and one that held the magpie nests. The yard seemed terribly empty and bare when they had finished. Still, they were content so long as the old willow stood; Enok wanted to cut that down too, since there was a superstition about it: his father had thought that it was a luck tree. The only thing that saved it was that it stood in the path of the northwest wind.

One day as they sat scraping bark, old Salomon Storbrekke came driving into the yard with pauper Lars. It was their turn to keep him for the parish. Anna sighed; now she would have one more burden loaded onto her, for Lars was the worst of all the unsavory creatures supported by the parish. He was an idiot, half child and half animal; he could not talk like a human being, even though he was forty years old. Sometimes he could hardly walk, but staggered along like an old man, his long, bony frame shaking and writhing. He was disgusting to look at with a fat, gray-greasy face with a fixed animal smile, and small, brown, empty eyes. The

worst thing about him was his shamelessness; it was hard to have him in the house where there were children. Once Anna had come on Gunnar and Carolus playing with him in the barn in a way that made her shudder to think of it. Now this twisted stump of a creature was going to be here three days.

"Good day to you all," cried old Salomon loudly. He sounded almost like Napolon save that his voice was reedy with age. "Here I come with Lars; so I don't expect any welcome. Now then, in with you, you cow. Get over there by the stove; you're no beauty no matter how one looks at you. Get out of sight and take your behind with you and your bundle too. Now then, there you have him."

Lars edged over by the stove back end first, whining something in a pig squeal that nobody understood. "Erh, erh, erh, erh, he, he." Then he laughed. "Heh, heh."

"You're venturing out in pretty brisk weather, Salomon," said Enok loudly. "You're getting old now. How are you feeling these days?"

"Thanks for asking, Enok. I can say like Torkjell Tualand, 'My wrath grows and my strength goes.' It's age, d'ye see?" He took a deep breath and sat down. "By God, that's the truth."

"Are you still swearing, old as you are?"

"Heh? You've got to speak up when you talk to me; I'm as deaf as a post."

"Swear, eh?" Old Salomon glared coldly at Enok with his tawny hawk eyes. "Surely, I swear a bit, that I do, and it's wrong. Whistling and swearing are gypsy tricks, but for all that you'd better mind your own business."

He thrust his staff against the floor and straightened up. "Is it true what they're saying — that you're mad?" He asked that in such a straightforward and casual tone that they all had to laugh. He was the same old fellow still. "It's nothing to laugh about," he said sharply, "for if what folk say is true, you should have been in the madhouse long ago."

"Well . . . Unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness."

"Heh?"

"Unto the Jews a stumblingblock —"

"Stumblingblock! You'd better say that once more. Isn't the world good enough for you, or do you think that you'll get a better place in Heaven than me because you go around with this ungodly hang-dog look? By God, I thought you had better sense."

"The contempt of the world we should hear with gladness."

"Heh? That you shouldn't — not when you've earned it. Huh! Have you never heard of those who recite long prayers that they may be respected of men? Do you think that the Lord pays any attention to all that bleating? They say that you lie around and squeal and sing all day Sunday like a she-cat in heat. I think that the Lord would say what I do — that, by God, Enok Haave could find something more worth while to do."

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. . . . Because they are spiritually discerned."

"Heh? Don't come to me with your texts and

your crucifixes. I'm old enough to be your father. I have seen more of the world than you have, and I'd never believe that Our Lord can be the kind of scoundrel that you and the Haugeans think — that I wouldn't. We had a good parson before this one; old Parson Juel was the best one we've had and he didn't talk about hell, except for thieves and rascals, for God's Death, there are some of them that don't deserve anything better. If we live like honorable men, though, do the best we can. . . . Aren't we the creations of God? Don't you think that He knows what is inside us — even before we come into the world? And if He should cast anyone into hell, it would have to be those who think so ill of Him that they believe He would deal that way with people. If you don't get into hell, with all your bleating and whining, then, by God, you won't get into Heaven either — that's what I think."

Enok sighed. The poor old man.

Anna came in with a beer mug and offered it to Salomon. He thanked her and drank. "Thanks to you; you've always been a fine woman, Anna."

Soon afterwards he got up and started to leave. "Get out of here, and harness up my mare, dunder-head," he growled at Carolus — and he went. "Heh, heh," laughed the idiot in the corner by the stove.

"Now you must stay awhile and eat with us," Anna urged him.

"No, that I won't, Anna girl. A fellow like that by the stove will be the best sort of company for your husband; I don't belong in such a crowd."

"Well, you'd better stay a little while," urged Enok.

"Heh? No, I won't, but if there's anything that you want to say to me, say it now. By God, I'm not going to run away from your Bible talk."

"You should remember that you are old, Salomon. The Bridegroom may come before He is expected."

"What's that about a bridegroom?"

"He who desires to be your soul's bridegroom, Salomon."

Salomon spat. "Now let me tell you if you want to talk with me, you've got to talk like a man and not like a Haugean."

"I mean that it won't be so very long before you'll die."

"That's right. Do you expect to get anything in my will?"

"You should try to make your peace with God before you die."

"I've done it and done a better job than you have. He can come when He wants to; he'll not find me doing anything that I won't answer for."

"You shouldn't talk that way. All our deeds are as a defiled garment."

"No, God help me if mine are," answered Salomon. "I have a better opinion of my deeds than that. And if Our Lord is harsh with us, He's no county judge either."

"God is a destroying flame...."

"God is just what we want Him to be, my friend. If you want such a hangman for a God, He'll be that to you. But you ought to be ashamed of *your* deeds. You're killing your wife before your own face and eyes, and filling your house with tramps.

That's what I said before: you should have been in the madhouse long ago, and perhaps you'll come there later on. Well, farewell and thanks. Good-bye, Anna, you've always been a fine woman, and I'm sorry for you." Salomon went out.

Those last words had struck home to Enok. He began to look at his wife with keener eyes as she worked about the house and struggled with her duties. It was true enough; she did look pretty poorly. Was Salomon right? Didn't God care a rap about his prayers? Could he have mistaken God's will? Were all his ideas stuff and nonsense? What about these "Jesus children"? Didn't God care about them either? Perhaps that was a self-chosen service which the Lord would reject. He had come upon Gunnar and Jorina when they were alone and should have been working, and what had he heard? Jorina was standing there and telling Gunnar old stories of the Huldre — planting in him old lies and superstitions, and teaching him the worst sort of heathendom.

And was Carolus any better? He was agreeable and alert and obedient enough as long as he was under one's eye, but there was nothing there to build upon save his quick, lying gypsy tongue. It was not a good sign that Gunnar was with him more and more; Enok had heard him practising the gypsy speech. What if the Lord had no interest in this sacrifice of his and even intended to turn it to his harm? What if the whole affair had been merely the sly trick of Satan? Didn't Olsen, too, go about dreaming of the time when he had felt God within him and heard His Spirit speak in his heart?

He came in one evening at dusk. Little Paul was screaming and Serina sat by the cradle rocking it and singing to him:

*"On Dovrefell
On Dovrefell
The sheep and goats are dancing.
Behind the piper comes
The little red calf a-prancing."*

"What sort of stuff is that you are humming?" said Enok. "Can't you sing something worth while? If you did, perhaps little Paul would stop crying. Sing the verse that Carolus taught you a little while ago. That was a nice little song."

Serina wiggled uneasily; she looked ashamed.

"Now then, hurry up. Do you want me to get angry with you?"

Serina began to sing a hymn, but softly and mumblingly and hurriedly. Some of the words she slid over entirely.

*"No matter where my way may wind,
I always Mmsus have in mind.
Wherever I may turn or go,
For Mmsus does my yearning grow."*

"That's right; but speak out clearly, and then you'll see that he'll stop."

Serina sang another verse, loudly as if she were more willing, but Paul howled all the worse, and then she began again with Dovrefell. It was strange to see how effective that was.

Enok stood by the window lost in heavy thoughts. Wasn't this dislike of a child for God's Word a terrible thing? Paul was almost quiet now; one could almost believe that he did not like to hear about Jesus, even though he had been baptized. He didn't want to think of Gunnar any more; there there was sure hate. If he could get away from Enok's preaching even for a moment, he rushed off as if his tail were on fire. As for the school that Enok had begun again — the same children who had been so attentive to Olsen were not to be moved by word or whip; he could hardly get a reply out of them, least of all from Gunnar.

What was the trouble? "Everything that you pray to the Father for in my name, that shall He give unto you." Ah! how fervently he had prayed, and with all his heart, but things grew worse and worse.

They had been baptized, too, and by baptism had been filled with the Holy Spirit, taken into Grace, and loosed and freed from the power of Satan. But still — still God and all that was God's was still hateful to them.

His thoughts grew heavier and heavier. He stood one day on his doorstep. Was what some said of baptism true? "Get thee behind me, Satan." He put the thought from him, but it came again.

The Baptists and other sects said that the baptism of children was merely a device of mankind; it was a disgrace to and scorn of the Holy Ghost, they said, to take a child in swaddling clothes that could not even tell left from right and ask it if it believed — mere contempt for religion, and sheer

foolishness. That was why the Devil had such power in the world — we weren't rightly baptized.

"God help me and save me. Let not the Devil obtain a hold on me that he may lead me astray and tear me from the Church and the Ark of Salvation," he prayed, and cried on the Lord in his great need, but his thoughts rolled on unceasingly.

Then one day he went over to see the pastor. Parson Meier was a kindly man, and a learned one, too. God had given him the calling of Shepherd and so we should turn to him when we needed him. Meier would like to have Enok come to him; he was a friendly man, was Meier.

Enok got some help from the parson. He was a remarkable man. Was it thinkable that learning alone should help so much?

As soon as Enok began to talk, all his cares and doubts left him, so that he really had to drag them up one by one. He did not understand how the Devil had obtained such power over him. What the parson said was true enough; it was dangerous to isolate oneself from the church. "You shouldn't forsake men and their ways, Enok, even though the tares grow among the wheat."

The parson warned him especially to be patient — and not merely to pray for patience and wait for it to come, but to exercise himself in patience, for the parson thought that there was the great trouble for Enok. "You are having too easy a time so that you're like a spoiled child; as soon as things go wrong, you feel injured and begin to mistrust God's means of Grace. All these trials of yours you should bear thankfully, recognizing that they are God's

helping punishments, which you will get more good from than from all your happy days of certainty. You can be sure that your household won't be lost; they are merely waiting for the right tide and time, and God wishes, for your own sake, that you wait and toil. As Abraham waited many years on Isaac, so you can wait many long days; perhaps you yourself will never see your children come to the Saviour. Hold out and pray, knowing well that His time will come and that His time is the right one."

Enok felt better; he was moist-eyed when he took the parson by the hand. "Thank you; thank you."

After that the parson talked with him of other things. "Sell all that you have and give to the poor? Yes, surely, if that is the only way you can tear yourself loose from the world. But if you can — if you can use God's gifts as a worthy servant, to His honor and the gain of your neighbor. . . . Do you believe that God would really have worldly men rule over His possessions here on earth? Riches in themselves are not dangerous. The question is — Does the heart cleave to the riches?"

Yes, that was true, thank God; now he could be at peace on that point; the parson himself had interpreted God's Word to him. Tear himself away from the world. Yes, he could tear himself loose; he had already; he had no further troubles on that score. All those inner voices of his might just as well come from Satan.

As Enok was going, the parson thanked him for helping him with the Commissioners of the Poor on the question of Gypsy Tomas's land and house.

"It'll go through now," said Meier, "and that's something that I can thank you for, and I alone don't thank you. I want to express the gratitude of Eilert Sundt and other friends of the poor gypsy folk. Now whether you agree or not, I'm going to make you a member of the School Board. We'll have a lot of work to do there, and I'd like to have such an intelligent and Christian man as you to work with me."

Enok went home relieved and at peace, with his head full of new fresh thoughts. He thanked God from the bottom of his heart. "Thank you, Father, for your holy clergy."



XVII

THE next Sunday a strange thing happened — Enok dressed in his best clothes and said that he was going to church.

Anna could hardly believe her ears. "Why, there's no Communion today."

He answered: "Shouldn't we visit a good friend except when he spreads the table for a feast?" He went on to say that he had made a mistake in this matter and had not interpreted God's will correctly.

Anna felt that the world grew brighter; for the first time in all these years she had heard those words from Enok: "I have made a mistake." That should betoken something; perhaps the worst had blown over.

Gunnar and Carolus were so happy that they could hardly contain themselves — now they would have some time to themselves. But their gladness was soon turned to sorrow; they would have to go to church too. Gunnar writhed protestingly, was so sour and surly that he was a sight to see. His father was indignant. "See the faces he's making," he said. "Have you ever seen such a spectacle? If you want to see how ugly sin is, look at Gunnar — and it's all because he has to go to God's temple." He sighed. Then he suddenly growled in his harshest tones: "Now then hurry up." Gunnar knew that tone of

voice. He went off to get ready, but he was so rebelliously slow that Enok told him he had better make haste and not crawl like a louse on a tar-brush. Serina had to stay at home; there had to be somebody to watch the house. That was usual; Serina got out of everything.

It was a gray cold day with a biting sleety wind. Anna had wrapped herself up so that in the carriage seat she looked like a great bundle of clothes. Gunnar was to stand behind. He came out in his wool trousers with a red-striped cloth vest and neckband, feeling very proud of his costume. "You can't go as thinly clad as that," said Enok; "you'll freeze to death." He dashed into the hallway and came back with one of his own big old coats. "Here; put this on." Gunnar refused.

"What's that?"

"But, Father, it's so ugly."

"Ugly? Did you ever hear the like? The lad is full of the vanity of the world. Put it on if you don't want a whipping."

"You know that you've got to have enough clothes on,"—his mother tried to smooth it over. Gunnar felt betrayed on all sides. He swore under his breath but yielded and stepped up into the wagon. "Hell's pit, I've always got to go around looking like a tramp."

"Get up, Brunko, in God's name," said Enok. He gave her rein and she rolled off down the road with many little salutes coming from her back port.

After that day Enok was as well known in church as the parson himself. He walked along the church road silent and thoughtful. We should keep

our foot when we go to the House of God. If any one greeted him and began to talk with him, Bible texts streamed out of his mouth until the person who had spoken merely out of curiosity grew silent and moved away.

Sometimes he came on Nicodemuses, who had secretly turned to God but did not dare renounce the world. These he tried to exhort and guide. When they attempted to examine the secrets of the Lord or understand His mysteries, and set up their own intelligence as guide, he would have little to do with them. "Don't you understand how God can be Three in One?" he said to Tobias Traadal. "Pray to God that He give you faith, and when you have learned to believe, you will learn to understand. 'For if you believe,' it stands written, 'then will you see the glory of God.'"

When he noticed, however, all the new things that were creeping into the parish — frills and fur-belows and vanities of all sorts — he was seized with a holy zeal and talked of punishments and the wrath of God. The women folk decked themselves out with silk kerchiefs and dresses of store cloth, and the men wore hats of a new style and watch chains of silver; around on the farms people were building great, showy houses and painting them white so that they would shine out over the countryside; they drove about in carioles and chaises as if they were lords. One after another they had taken to these new plows that Möller at Myre had imported — just as if fine implements were worth more than the blessing of God. Some had even bought straw-chopping machines and threshing machines. There would come

a day when they would weep for such vanity, and then God would show them that He did not allow Himself to be scorned.

Gunnar, who had always to walk by his side and keep pace with him, was ashamed that his father was not like other people. Even his clothes were different; his homespun coat of black wool turned ugly shades of brown. Gunnar was not pleased with his own clothes, either; they were ugly too, he saw now — too small around the shoulders and too short in the leg. His shoes were impossible; his father had made them himself, and it seemed as if everything that his father made was ugly.

As long as Carolus was with him, he got along somehow, but oftentimes Carolus stayed at home. He had a genius for making himself sick; if the necessity arose, he could vomit. When Enok came and said that he must pray, then he would answer, "That I shall, and you must pray for me too, Father, for it is the Lord who is punishing me." Gunnar could not make himself sick, and if he were sick, he stayed up, none the less; it was too uncomfortable to have his father come over to him, stare down at him, and ask him what the matter was. "For God doesn't punish you without cause, Gunnar."

One other wonderful thing happened — the children were to go to school again. Since the wrong Book of Explanations was no longer in use, Enok had now no reason for holding aloof; such aloofness might lead to vanity, he said. Then, too, the new teacher was a serious and reliable man, and the children were getting no good from their home teaching. Anna was as happy as if she had found

gold. Gunnar liked it, too, but he was happier when he learned that his father had been chosen a member of the School Board — then he would get more free time.

School began; and Tönes Tualand proved in his quiet way to be a clever schoolmaster. He was very young and undersized; the tall louts from Storbrekke and Heialand could easily have thrown him out if they had wished, but his rule was miraculously quiet and orderly, even though he used neither switch nor ruler, and not many words either. The only person that he was hard on was Gunnar, who was altogether too boisterous when he was with other children.

Tönes, however, established several new customs — one in particular which Anna did not like. He divided the school into classes, and each class had to do certain lessons together. Then, too, he was very strict about attendance. The person who was absent for a day no longer received special attention, but had to keep up with the class by himself. Those children who were away from school very long at a time got little good from their schooling, and nothing but harsh words and annotations in their reports and in the new character books that they now had to have, reports which did not help them when they came up before the parson later on. Anna talked to the schoolmaster about it, but he only said that it was now the law. A new school law had been passed, he explained, and it had to be enforced here; according to that law, children had to attend school. Their parents might be fined if

they kept their children at home for any reason save sickness.

Anna thought that was unreasonable. Wasn't she capable of taking care of her own children? If she had to send them off every day in all sorts of weather and they sat in school all day with wet feet, she'd find out some day that their health was broken. Serina especially was not strong. They would have no lawful excuse before she was sick, and then it would be too late. Anna felt that school was an entirely different thing after that.

Formerly it had been a help, but now it was another burden. For the Law could send the sheriff and make her helpless in her own home. If she needed Serina home for a day, then this crofter's son from Ramstad could come and with never a "by your leave" could take her child away. She felt herself set aside and insulted, and no longer liked school. Only now and then did she listen to the lessons, usually at times when they sang, for Tönes was awfully good at singing. It was queer to notice what a difference his training had made in his voice; he talked with an entirely different intonation from the old people, and he could sing a good tenor. When he really let loose, there came such a voice from his little body that he could be heard for a long way. He sang with the children almost every day and taught them much that was new and queer, something that he called scales that just went up and down — queer enough to make one laugh. Then he taught them some songs that were called national songs — like "*The Smiling Evening Sun*," "*The Brook Runs Through the Meadow*" . . . Enok took

offense at these songs, but Tönes said that they were sung in all the schools and that educated people saw no harm in them.

One evening another bit of news spread through the parish. "They are going to force us to have regular school and send the children off to it, send them to a strange man who will hold school in a special house where nobody else may come in. There he can teach them whatever he wishes." Enok, who ordinarily was against everything that was new, was in favor of this. Did people change their skins when they got on the School Board?

Tönes was so enthusiastic about a regular school that he was almost unendurable, and he flattered Enok outrageously. He was a "most enlightened man," "the best we have on the School Board." Enok deprecated his remarks, but it was obvious that he liked them as well as the next man. Tönes had all sorts of reasons for the new order: it was so unsatisfactory to have the school in a house with other people, and often there was not good air in the rooms. Anna nearly asked him how the air was at Torkjell's down in the Ramstad hills. Enok sat like a dunce and nodded agreement.

"Well," said Anna, "since it's always been the custom to hold school in our houses, it's clear there is One who is in favor of it."

The young schoolmaster twisted in his chair.

"According to the new school law," answered Enok, "there are going to be regular schools everywhere now. You can see that He thought there ought to be a change."

"Had that law come here then? Who had the

right to make such laws? Now suppose there was a schoolmaster who was so wicked that he wanted to teach an unsound doctrine or do other things like that?"

The schoolmaster smiled. "We have a parson and an inspector who'll look out for that. Then the parents can come themselves and listen to the instruction when they want to."

"Oh — they'll let us do that, will they? I thought maybe we were too plain folks for that too."

"Then there's One above Who will see to it that the Word is kept clean and pure for us, if we pray for it. Now let us turn to Him and thank Him for today's blessings." Enok went over to the cupboard and pulled out the hymn books. "Perhaps the teacher will be so good as to lead us in the singing since he is with us today."

Tönes reddened a bit and answered yes.



XVIII

IT was an afternoon when school had closed. Tönes always closed early. He sat now at the head of the long school table, smoking and reading. Carolus had come up to him with a problem in arithmetic on which he wanted help; he was trying to get into the good graces of the schoolmaster. On the bench in front of the table sat Gypsy Tomas. He had come in his capacity as father to see how his son was getting on, he averred. In reality, though, he wanted to try a passage at arms with the new teacher. He had heard that he was a clever man, and Tomas never felt at ease before he had displayed his powers to a newcomer. This young squirt would have to have the Devil with him if he was going to win against Tomas.

For a long time the schoolmaster sat there without giving ear to what Tomas said, but Tomas was not discouraged, and gesticulated and scraped till he at last got the teacher's attention and made him lay aside his book. Tomas began to propose one of his knottiest problems, one that even Pastor Meier himself could not solve.

The Seventh Commandment declared: Thou shalt not steal; Moses had written this commandment with his finger on a stone tablet on the summit of Mt. Sinai, and the Lord God had Himself set

His seal and stamp upon it so that we should do as Moses had written. There was no ground for any doubt or discussion here. As it was written, so must it stand.

"But see now," said Gypsy Tomas, and wagged his head, "how the truth of this matter may change if we look at it from a different angle or another point of view. For there are many matters that we are not really clear about if we examine them from only the usual point of view; but if we try all methods of research that we have at our command, then they'll straighten out." Tomas spat tobacco juice.

"However," he continued, "if we keep on with our discoveries and our researches, and test all the evidence and every aspect of the matter by setting one result against another until one stands as witness against another, as the Apostle says, then both of them may be wrong and we won't know how to behave, and can't get any way out. That's because our natural understanding is darkened by sin, as we all know. You'll see now the difficulty of coming to any conclusion."

He twisted his head to one side and with a great wriggling of his shoulders and trunk, pulled up a bit of red chalk from his trouser pocket. With it he began to sketch on the chair seat. "This is the world," said Gypsy Tomas, "and here is a picture and likeness of something that is a well, but there is no bottom to this well; it goes straight down to outer space, and there's no one who knows anything more about it." He glanced up at the schoolmaster, wondered if he would say anything. The

schoolmaster merely nodded. "Now, up from this well there stretches a long pole. On the top of this pole is a plank, thus, right across the well. This plank is rather narrow, and not quite so long as the well is wide. No one can get off the plank. If anyone gets just the tiniest bit off the edge, down he goes, and that's the end. And now you'll have to follow me carefully," said Tomas. "Here" — he made a dot — "here on this end of the plank is the King, and here" — he made another dot — "is the Prime Minister. Then comes the Governor" — a new dot — "then the Bishop, then the Prefect, and then the Bailiff, and then the Judge, and then the Parson, and next the Merchant, and next the Sheriff." He made a dot for each one. "There they all are according to their rank, and position, and calling, just as God has put them into the world. Now after the Sheriff comes the Peasant, and after the Peasant, on the very end of the plank, comes the Laborer. He sits on one end and the King on the other. There's the world for you." Tomas looked up at the schoolmaster, wagged his head and spat.

"Yes, I see," said the schoolmaster.

"Now, you must bear in mind," continued Tomas, "that nobody can get off the plank. They all sit along it according to their place and rank, as measured by the world's standards. They sit there and busy themselves with their work: the King with his and the Prime Minister with his, and the Bishop with his and so on down to the Laborer who works at his task, for they've got to live, naturally, and they all want to live, reasonably enough. Now the question is — how are they going to get along, for

everyone has to get along, and there is no one to turn to. Now you must pay attention. The King sits up there; he has ten dollars a day. Next comes the Prime Minister; he has five. He can't get more than the King. Next comes the Governor; he has three. Then the Bishop; he has two, and so on down, less and less to each person. The Sheriff has four skillings a day, the Peasant only two, but he manages to get along. Then comes the Laborer; he has only one skilling, and he can't manage with that. He's got to starve to death.

"But right here is the vexing question. He doesn't want to starve to death. What is he to do? Why should he starve more than any of the rest? Isn't he created in God's image like them, and hasn't the Son of God bought him free with His Own Blood just as He has the others? And in the end, isn't he going to the same pit and down the same way as the rest? Finally he comes to the decision that he will live just as the others are doing. He goes to the Peasant and says, 'I've got to have one and a half skillings a day because I can't live on only one.' The Peasant answers, 'Well, go to hell then; you won't get any half skilling off me.' Then he goes to the Sheriff. The Sheriff pulls out his sabre and says something like this, 'Get back to your work, you dog, or I'll put you in the lock-up for a vagabond.' Next he goes to the Merchant, but the Merchant takes out his yardstick and shows him the door. 'We've trouble enough of our own,' says the Merchant. To the Parson next. The Parson is forbearing and kindly, but he says that we must all be content in the position and calling in which God

has set us. Then to the Judge, then to the Bailiff, and then to the Prefect, and then to the Bishop, and then to the Governor, and finally to the Prime Minister. But they all say, 'We can't spare anything; we have just enough for ourselves.'

"Then the Laborer goes direct to the King, bows before him and makes obeisance. Then he says, 'Almighty King, Most Gracious and Most High,' he says, 'this is the way it is with me: I can't live on only one skilling; I've got to have one and a half at the very least. The Peasant has two, and that's only enough to keep himself. Help me, O King, out of your Majesty's great mercy, for I don't want to starve to death any more than the rest do.'

"But the King answers, 'If I helped you, I'd have to take from the others, and that I can't do; you'll have to look out for yourself as we all do.' Now we must see what the Laborer is going to do. He can't live; he doesn't want to die; he can't get off the plank; he can't get help anywhere. Then he thinks to himself, 'If I'm going to look out for myself, then I'll have to do what I think best; that's the rule of life on this plank.' Then he goes in all uprightness and takes the half skilling that he must have, and so he keeps life in himself and fills his belly very simply." Tomas looked very sly.

"So they live on," he continued, "each in his own way. Those on one end of the plank live as they have done before, and those on the other end do as best they can. Mark this, however. The plank lies out beneath the width of Heaven and rots in the sun and rain and change of seasons, and so we can

know what is going to happen. According to the nature of things the plank will eventually be rotten clear through, absolutely rotten in every splinter. Then it breaks in the middle and every one on it goes down the hole. Down goes the Laborer and the Peasant and the Sheriff and the Merchant and the Parson and the Bailiff and the Judge and the Prefect and the Bishop and the Prime Minister and the King and his crown and everything that they own. There's nothing. Ahem. Can you tell me the meaning of that experiment?"

Tomas's face had taken on its true gypsy cast, with its loose, cunning smile and its shifting, glowing eyes. The schoolmaster did not say much, merely said that it was not an easy matter. He did not bother to talk with Gypsy Tomas any further.

"No, it's not an easy matter," said Tomas and wagged his head. "Not even Pastor Meier knew enough to solve that problem. He told me that I mustn't ponder on these matters too much, for 'greater people than you have been hurt by such things,' he said."

"True enough," said the schoolmaster.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Carolus, "you're a good one, Father."

Gypsy Tomas smiled, and his little head bobbed proudly on his skinny neck; today he had tangled another clever lad in his word-net.



XIX

IT had been a good spring and a promising June; people went about smiling and affable — if the weather kept up, they could expect a banner year. But around Midsummer Day the weather changed. There came no more rain, and the heat grew steadily worse. Meadow and field showed no further signs of growth.

Folk walked about peering at the sky for signs of a break in the drought; every evening they gazed out to sea looking for a rain bank, and every morning toward the mountain barrier for a cloud. But the clouds faded away, and the banks in the sea were merely mist. The sun baked and burned down upon them like living fire. Their hopes sank and sank; people grew silent with fear. The air was dense, steamy, with fluttering, burning heat waves. There was never a breeze nor a puff of air; everything living lay gasping and thirsty, on the point of death. Meadow and field grew red and then white; marshes turned to meadow, and springs and ponds to marshes. Brooks and creeks dried up; fish lay gasping on the sandy bottoms, and died if they could not find any mud in which they could burrow.

Enok made trial of his patience with God's help. He knew that this was a trial, and that God would not try us beyond our strength. Let God take

care for the morrow; the earthly things had no power over him who had treasure in Heaven. He had the power of Grace to withstand, even though the Devil often troubled him sore.

Many listened to him when on his way to church he set forth his opinion that this trial was laid upon us by God for our sins. We should mend our ways and not faint. He Who fed the raven's young, and clad the lilies of the field so they were finer than King Solomon, would care for us too, wouldn't He? Those who had made fun of him before sighed now and wished that they felt as good and secure as Enok Haave.

That was the way with worldly men. When things went well, they made merry and laughed, but when things went against them, they wailed and lamented and lost heart. But the children of God were rooted in the sea of life—like mountains, as secure in bad weather as in good—if they only held fast to Grace and did not let slip the Saving Hand. "Hold me fast, O Lord, for of myself can I do naught."

His desire for the Word and for prayer had come again, so that he felt that he lived once more. Rarely was he without guidance in what he did; he felt judgment stirring within him—approval or punishment. His struggle with Satan was sterner than before; if he let go for a moment, he hardly knew where he might find himself—perhaps in the grossest worldly thoughts. Sometimes he had to ask himself if God's Spirit could live in a heart so full of sin and earthly desire. But the Holy Spirit comforted him, so that in his dark hours he felt It bear

witness within him that he was even now God's child.

It was a great help and comfort to him when he saw that God was making use of him as a tool to further His work. He looked with joy on the house that was now being built in the Ramstad hills, the house that he had helped build. The house belonged to Tomas. Who knew if the time had not come of which the parson spoke, the time when the gypsy would come into his own, and when God in His mercy would complete a great work. It was a sign of Grace, that God had put him on the School Board. Since He had done that, it was clear that He had trust in him and a desire to use him in His vineyard. "Oh, God, give me the full-opened eyes of wisdom, that I may serve You righteously in such a high calling."

And God had helped him to put to rights something in his house that had troubled him; here he thought that he clearly saw God's finger. It was the question of a serving maid. He saw that Anna was having a hard time and was not strong, but then there was the problem of whether or not it was lack of faith to seek for men's help, and if it was not His meaning that Anna should be punished for a time, so that she might turn to the Lord.

Then two things happened. First of all, God took Jorina from them. Her mother wanted her home, since her eldest daughter had gone out in service. Some days later, Rasmiss Skarc, Anna's half-brother, a poor farmer who had received help of Enok some time before, came up to the farm and almost prayed Enok to take his daughter as a maid. Maren was merely in the way at home, he said.

Then Enok understood the will of God and received the girl with thanks. He praised God so heartily for this management of His, this wonderfully apt management, that Anna had to turn away to hide her embarrassment.

While in this mood he prayed to God for "good and useful weather." As the parson said: God wanted us to come to Him with all our cares, like good children who talked over everything with their father, even to the least and humblest of them. Some time after St. John's Day they got a little rain, enough so that the grass lands were helped a little. They could comfort themselves, at least, said Enok, that God could make a little go as far as much.

They were standing in the meadow by the river, slashing and mowing away among the berry bushes and the moss-grown stones. It was a fine, sparkling morning around five o'clock. The scythes cut well through the heavy dew. There was little to cut, however. It was difficult for them to distinguish between what was mowed and what was not.

"It's not worth the price of a whetstone," said Torkjell Tualand as he stood whetting his scythe. "There's only mountain-tobacco and little stones. I've never seen anything like it. Heh!"

Enok was trimming out along a stone wall and soon had to stop to put an edge on his scythe, too. The sound of the whetstone rang merrily out on the morning air. The birds sang; the lark caroled from its straining breast, and about them was the strong, sweet scent of new-mown meadow hay.

"We shouldn't find fault with the Lord, Torkjell; He sends both rain and sun."

"Yes, but we've got to put on the manure ourselves," Tualand retorted. "If you had worked this piece as you have the rest, you'd have got some hay here." His scythe began to hiss through the grass on the hill in quick, short strokes. "We ought to use sickles on such miserable ground as this," Torkjell muttered.

Enok paid no particular attention to him; he was standing watching Gunnar and Carolus, who were working with the grown-ups this year. Gunnar was doing much the better, thought Enok. Carolus was taking it so easy that he was a sight to see. He stood whetting endlessly; then he found some errand to do here or there, and then he had to rest a spell. When he did get to work, he did little, merely stood and made motions in the same spot.

Be patient; be patient. . . .

Gunnar came over to his father, wanted him to whet for him; he'd raked the edge of his scythe across a stone.

"Well," asked his father, "is it going good? I think that you're better at it than . . . somebody that should be stronger." Gunnar grew red. "There, you can see how it is," said Enok. "You thought it was pretty hard to get up, but you see that He is helping you." The lad twisted away from his father with a grimace of disgust.

"Well, I wouldn't hunt up a boy at three o'clock in the morning," said Torkjell. "Young lads need sleep if they're going to amount to anything."

"When Jesus was twelve years old, He sat among the wise men in the temple," answered Enok

shortly. "If you just turn to God, you'll be strong enough. The dawn has gold in its mouth, you know."

After they had worked two hours without a word, Maren came hurrying out with rake and fork, to spread the hay after them.

"'Good morning,' said the bride in the evening," said Torkjell, chaffing.

"Yes," said Maren, "I'm late this morning, but it's not because I was a bride last night." She was a plump, silly little person about twenty-two years old.

"One should never believe a woman." Torkjell wagged his head and squinted up at her.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," scolded Maren. You could see that she was flattered. "You mustn't think that I would sleep with anyone before I've been to the parson."

"Heh, heh. Now you've got to rush around as if you were on a dancing floor, Maren. For four hours, four of us have been working here, and I suppose that there's enough here to give you an apron full. See to it that you don't do any spreading anywhere else save where we've been cutting."

The sun rose higher and the dew went; it was hard, discouraging work to mow on the dry slope. They went back to the house and changed scythe blades.

"There'll be a good many hungry mouths around here this winter."

"If there are, they'll have earned it." Enok was frowning.

"Yes, if it hit those who earned it! The hay at the sheriff's is so thick that it's a wonder to see."

Enok was silent. Perhaps there might be some-

thing in these new machines and in bonemeal. Get thee behind me, Satan.

Round about the fields now people sank to the ground around their lunch pails and had an early bite. Gunnar almost cried when he saw that; he was so famished that he thought he would break in two. But God had willed that we should eat only four times a day, Enok had declared, and so we shouldn't yield to our lusts with any between-meal snacks — they all had to work without any lunch. God wouldn't let us be hurt for working till His time came. Carolus had stolen half a cake at home, and he hid himself behind a fence and ate it up, then came back into the field buttoning up his trousers as if he had been away on quite a different errand.

Torkjell began to talk; it was a long stretch; he had to do something to make the time pass. All the knaveries of the sheriff were told at full length, and then Torkjell began on the sins of the civil officers, a tight circle, according to him, that lived off us poor and used all their power to get rich by any means, means so gross sometimes that we would be put in jail if we tried anything like them. Then he went on to pay his respects to the clergy, who were no better, and who proclaimed that these same officials were set in their positions by God himself. Not that they were, heh! Since 1814, when the rich men rose and tore themselves loose from our rightful king in Copenhagen, because he was on to them and punished them sometimes — after that time we had had no legal government in the country, for it had never been God's meaning that we should be under Sweden. The rich men, however, had got a

letter from the Swedish king, saying that they would have the right to govern themselves, and so they sold the land to Sweden for that reason, so now it was Sweden that ran our government. We small folk no longer had anyone to whom to turn. The Swedish king was given one hundred thousand dollars a year to keep his mouth shut, and the parliament got just as much to keep its mouth shut, and whoever went to the parliament and made his complaint got only hot air with a long ribbon around it. And if we rose and demanded our rights, as people had done under Thrane, then the parliament was the first to send soldiers against us and throw us into jail. Heh! No, since we had come under Sweden. . . .

Enok stood frowning at Carolus who was lying in the berry bushes eating whortle-berries. Was God going to make a fool of him this time? Wasn't this gypsy going to amount to anything either? He had been as patient as he could for a long time now, treated Carolus as reasonably as he could, thought that he might be a good influence over him; but the only thanks that he got was this: that every day the gypsy got lazier and lazier, and did more and more as he would. And now his father was talking about paying him wages; so if Enok said anything to him, he got only the answer that he could hardly expect anything else if he didn't pay him anything.

"You mustn't let the sun get the better of you, Gunnar," he called. He looked at Carolus when he said it, and Carolus caught his meaning.

"You must excuse me," he said, "but I'm not feeling well, and when I don't have anything to eat

for a long while, I get so weak and empty that I can hardly stir."

"Heh!" said Torkjell. "Carolus wasn't born last week."

"Since Gunnar can keep up," began Enok, but he stopped. The gypsy had a knack of answering back. After a bit he continued, "If you want to earn wages, Carolus, you'll have to take hold better. As big and strong as you are, your father expects . . . that there'll be . . . some honor in you."

"It was a good thing that you mentioned Father. He doesn't expect, anyway, that I should starve to death at Haave." Carolus was red in the face, and his eyes were sharp.

Enok kept silent; he was gray in the face. God was against him here, too; Carolus was a gypsy as he had always been.



XX

A SUNDAY. On Sundays they slept a little later than usual, got up about six o'clock. Enok could not help looking out immediately to see how the weather was; he had prayed so faithfully for rain yesterday. It is clear and fine in all quarters. The wide arch of the sky is a pale blue, filled with sunshine from the mountain barrier to the sea. In the southwest a couple of light feathery clouds are rising toward the zenith. The mist on the sea means nothing—it is just the fog.

The last little mist cloud rises from the Heialand lake and vanishes in the air. The morning is cool and fresh, but as the sun climbs higher, the air grows warmer. The flocks of lapwings dart about over the marshes, gleaming white in the sun and giving their short, sharp cry. The lark rises and rises till it almost disappears from sight, and then hangs there aloft and sings and soars.

They let out the cattle, and a little herd of sheep that Enok had not sent to the hills this year, since the two smallest of his daughters were big enough to act as herders. The whole group of animals goes hopping, jumping, dancing, bellowing toward the river and their pasture. Cows, calves, sheep, and lambs play around one another, make quick little stiff-legged jumps, lunge at one another

with bent heads. The calves gallop after the sheep and scare them; the heifers sniff noses; the young bulls paw and bellow. They are all full of the joy of high summer.

Carolus is the herder on Sundays; he slouches along behind the herd, long and lean. He has a long staff in his hands, and jumps and vaults like the calves. Then he tries to sing:

*"Oh, my dear children . . .
Oh, do not quarrel so . . ."*

but his voice breaks; it has not changed yet.

Far out in the west the sea gleams pale. Brown and white sails shine upon it in the morning breeze; at the edge of the horizon is a black smudge from a steamship. Carolus leaps high in the air. Who knows; next Sunday he may be out there. He has nothing on save a pair of breeches and a blue-striped cotton shirt and a little flat cap, but he has a sudden desire to throw them all off and run around naked among the calves and lambs like Adam in Paradise.

He drives the sheep to the north of the mill-house and down into the marsh where there is feed enough for them; and where it is cool enough to keep off the horseflies. The sheep, however, keep to the edge of the hill around the mill; they do not like the marsh grass. Perhaps they want to get into the river meadow, but they've got to ask me first, thinks Carolus.

Carolus has plenty of time to himself now and goes straight out into the marsh to hunt for lapwing nests. "I-reh; ireh; i-reh." The lapwings shriek and

follow him in flocks. The air is full of scents: the fresh, sharp fragrance of young heather, field-flowers, trodden berry leaves, trefoil and myrtle, blended with the sweetish odor of vegetable decay. The warm air is like a drug. Quietly he goes from tuft to tuft, breathes in long, deep breaths. It's so good; it's so good....

The shriek of the lapwings from the marsh and the piping of the plover from the hillside blend together like the call of a fiddle and the smooth trilling of a flute. A great, dark heron starts up with flapping wings and heads toward the Heialand lakes. Fierce, angry, the lapwings flutter about Carolus's head in pairs and in flocks, shriek and shriek, dart up into the air. Sometimes they almost get at his eyes; he hears the creaking of their wings and feels the whish of their wingbeats across his neck. Ha! Ha! Sometimes they crouch down before him, take a sight on his eyes and fling themselves straight against him and then at the last minute swing aside, so close that he can see their eyes blink. Ha, ha, it's a good game! He eggs them on, throws bits of turf and roots at them. They get wilder and wilder.

The air grows warmer and the midges begin to sting; Carolus feels tired and is about to stop. There are no eggs here, he thinks; the young ones are all hatched; but there, damn it, is a nest with four large eggs. Beautiful they are with the little black dots on the smooth, gray, greenish shell. They're old ones, though. He gets down and gathers them up into his cap while the lapwings scream in wild despair. He takes them over to a little clump

of trees where there is a little puddle of water deep enough to float them. Think of it, they are so far along that they can stand on the little end. A lapwing comes after him and almost pecks the eyes out of him; sometimes she alights on the ground and comes driving at him with her broad wings waving. She's the one that owns the eggs, probably. Well, she can have them. One after another he throws the eggs at her angrily. They whizz across the tufts of grass and break into bits, so the ground is splashed with red and yellow. Then he thrusts his hands into his pockets and walks off whistling, pleased with himself. The lapwings follow him for a while, and finally fly away with sharp little screams.

Those cursed sheep — they are drifting away south toward the river meadow. Carolus goes after them on his long legs and heads them back with wild cries, and stones. By the eaves to the north of the mill is the coolest place, and there he throws himself down and rests, and listens to the roar of the brook. The sun grows hotter and hotter; a little puff of west wind blows through the heather; the sheep cast themselves down with grunts and chew their cuds. The cows drift down toward the river where they wade out and stand swishing their tails, facing downstream. There's not much water there, but probably a draft follows down with the current.

He puts his arms under his head and lies staring out toward the horizon in the southwest, toward the sharply etched line of the hills and the line of the sea beyond. Here and there a stone or a little hummock thrusts up into the sky, smooth, distinct,

and rounded. That's where a treasure is buried — perhaps a big chest of silver money, but a champion is sitting there and guards the treasure with his sharp sword. If anyone wants to break in, he'd better look out. The air is so clear that he can see every stone and tuft of grass as far as his eye can carry. Above him a fleecy, white summer cloud drifts by. Far down below the hills the Myre church shines white over the fields in the sunshine.

What a shimmer in the air! The strip of sea out there and all the clear line of the ridges waver and dance in a steady rhythm against the sky. It's so good and warm. The sun bakes his young body, and the soft currents of air caress his eyes. It is quite still. The birds have gone back to their nests. Fragrance rises from the heather. Carolus daydreams.

On a day like this it is sweet to be a wanderer, when the gypsies lie amongst the hills, and sun themselves. There's a little liquor in a bottle and a pack of cards, and the wenches lie on the sunny slope, tame and lazy. I'll not be a farmer any longer. Oh, Mother, Mother, you thought that a farm girl would be fit for a gypsy lad. But she's afraid of me, is Serina, since that day in the barn when I tried to put my arms around her neck. She's a beautiful lass, smooth and trim, with blue eyes, and soft, smooth cheeks with dimples, but I can't wait for her.... Perhaps when I come back as a captain, and if she's free then?... Who knows? Captain Thomassen, spelled with an "h" — Captain C. M. Thomassen....

It would be hard on Gunnar, but I can't hold

out any longer. Holy Enok is harder and harder to stand. And now Father isn't away all the time. I'll go down there first, and then to the town, and get on a ship, and if I can't right away, I can come back home there. I'll go to town early tomorrow morning, before Holy Enok can get at me.

Carolus grows sleepy, lies for a while half dozing, hears the world about him through the thin curtain of sleep. There's a wavering light upon the hills, the white glare of the sun; there are blue mountains in a dream, far far away. He hears the faint roar of the brook, dim undertones, the clangor of a bell.

High up on a hill stands a man swinging his long arms; it's Roland raging in battle; no, it's his father. He stands there calling and waving. "Carolus!" Carolus wakes from his doze and starts toward his father, thinks that he sees him by a great stone up there, and still hears an echo of his shout, "Carolus!" "Yes, I'm coming!" Suddenly his father has disappeared; there's nothing to see; he has vanished like an apparition in the flood of sunlight. Carolus shades his eyes with his hand and stares, can not yet understand that he is only dreaming.

"Yes, yes, Father, I'll be coming tonight. Don't be afraid when I tap on the window-pane; it won't be the sheriff. Those devil sheep! Hey, hey! Hell, it's my last day; let 'em go wherever they want to. Tomorrow evening I'll be in town, and then out on the blue sea. Hurrah, boy."



XXI

WHEN they started out to the mowing the next morning, Carolus was nowhere to be found. Enok was not worried. "He'll come back all right," he said. When they came back to lunch, however, and ground the scythes, Cornelius, son of Helge, came by. He had just come from his term of military service in Christianssand, he said, and the night before at half past eleven had seen the gypsy, with a bundle under each arm, striding off south toward the Ramstad hills.

Enok would hardly yet believe. There was no reason for it; Carolus could not have run away; he would come back. He would be there in the evening, mealy-mouthed with prayers and excuses. He would not reward them for their care by running away. Enok had worked with him so long and so patiently, so forbearingly and so wisely. . . . And Carolus had been so well treated there, with his own place at the table and never a harsh word, and guidance and good care in everything — treated like a child of their own. Even if he were a gypsy, he would not reward them so.

That evening, though, Gypsy Tomas came over. He broke out into loud lamentations for "the sorrowful thing that had happened" and apologized for Carolus with the longest words that he could find.

The foul Lucifer had gotten into the boy, if he might use so ugly a word. "I and his mother did everything that stood in our power to dissuade him — reminded him of his future, and his debts; yes, I, in all humility, may God forgive me for it, even used force against my own flesh and blood, but he was so stubborn and obstinate that he would go to sea. Today he's gone to the town and is going to try for a ship, and I want to ask you, Enok, in our great sorrow and bereavement, that you won't be angry with us for this."

There was no longer any doubt; Enok was silent and cold. That was the thanks he got. Now it made no difference whether the lad went back to the gypsies or went to sea; he'd be lost either way.

How all the children of the world would laugh at Enok now. "That's what you get for being mixed up with gypsies." How those who had opposed him when he tried to get Gypsy Tomas a house would rejoice at what had befallen him. "Now he can have a taste of his own medicine. Why did he want to drag all this crew into our parish?" And the parson would say to him, "You couldn't have handled him in the right way, my dear Enok." And Lars Danielson and his friends would sit in meeting and sigh, and say that Enok Haave had not shown good judgment this time.

He was seized with a hard, cold wrath that he called "righteous indignation." This indignation was directed primarily against the parson, who had led him on in this matter of Tomas. If Tomas hadn't had a house, then Carolus wouldn't have run away. The parson was the cause of the whole unfortunate

business. He belonged to the world; he had not done this out of love for God but from a desire for worldly praise. He wanted to be honored by the government, by the mighty ones on earth. He had enticed Enok to help him with deceitful words. Enok had been not the tool of God, but the tool of the parson, and now the parson had taken the credit and honor for the deed, and Enok had the shame and punishment of it. He was so indignant that he stayed at home for two successive Sundays — one had to protect himself against the great. Now the parson had got a new idea; he wanted to have Jensen's reader in the schools. Enok looked over the book and was furious. There were poems and such stuff, even fairy tales, and things that were worse yet — misuse of God's name. That was what the shepherd of souls wanted to put into the schools. When the matter came to a vote in the School Board in the fall, the parson was astounded; his faithful Enok Haave had suddenly become a leader of the opposition.

Torkjell Tualand was right; the civil officers were untrustworthy. They sought only their own honor and profit, thought neither of the Word of God nor of the people. Enok went so far as to subscribe to the new paper of Jaabæk.* There was a paper that dared print the truth — for the first time since Thrane's time, as Torkjell said. For a whole half year Enok took in "The People's Times." Then he let his subscription lapse since there was so much misuse of God's name in it. But except for that, Jaabæk was right; the next time that there was an

* A noted politician, leader of a peasant faction in parliament.

election, Enok would give neither the sheriff nor the parson his support.

After the hot summer came an early fall and a hard winter. It snowed so heavily that the roads were buried in drifts; time after time they had to turn to and break them out. The snow lay for months on end, and then came thaws and slush, with sleet and icy rains. The northwest wind roared about the eaves in great blasts, and the heavens hung blue-black and close above them so that they never saw the sun, and then when the wind died down in the evening, the house was filled with the thunder of surf. Enok felt his indignation die away; he began to have thoughts of a darker cast. It was no longer the parson that he felt angry with; the parson would have to answer for his own sins; Enok had enough to do guarding himself.

He was threshing in the barn one day — what little they had to thresh this year. There was less than the year before; the bins were half empty. Why had God punished him so heavily, and in all ways? He was stricter in his Christianity than ever before. He mortified his soul with watching and prayer, and his flesh with fasting and hard work, mortified himself more than was good for him — we should crucify our flesh. What had Jesus not suffered! — and He was free from sin. How much more had we earned! He mortified himself and all his household. "Of late we have been too lazy and secure; so the flesh has grown proud. Therefore is God's hand heavy upon us. Back, back to our first love!"

Like David he pondered upon the Law of the

Lord day and night. What should he do that he might find favor in the sight of the Lord, and come again to his old safe, childlike sense of peace? He took again to his old customs, in every way, but his thoughts still darkly oppressed him. This time, too, God had rejected his sacrifice; straight out and wholly had He cast it from Him. He had not blessed his work nor heard his prayer, had thrown all out like so much worthless scrap, and left him standing exposed to the scorn and contempt of all people. There must be something wrong somewhere.

One evening toward spring he was standing in the barn chopping straw, when a thought flashed up before him like a flame. God had rejected his sacrifice because it had not been any sacrifice. All lies and self-deceit it had been, when he examined it closely, for he had not done it for love. In the most secret recesses of his heart, he acknowledged that he had done it for payment. He had, in secret, thought that God would bless him in other ways when he gave to the poor, but what was "blessing" but a better sounding word for "payment"? He dropped his work from his hands and stood there like a man struck witless. What state was he in? Was he God's child? He had lived in such great darkness, in such fleshly sin, and still thought that he lived in Grace. Could it all be but a dream, confusion, and self-deception?

Fearful and uneasy he began to examine his life and soon found worse and worse things there. For all his forsaking of the world he had loved it, none the less. He saw himself go into the town and trade and higggle with the town wives, and lie a little to

earn a half skilling on a measure of butter, or a meal bucket. Always he took what he could get, even if he knew that it was too much, and always those who knew least how to chaffer gave the most, though they often could least afford it. A liar and a cheat and a thief was he, and was glad, yes, even thanked God when his swindling went well. The warnings of the Holy Spirit he put aside. Why had he never thought of that before?

What of the times he had sat at a meeting of the Commissioners of the Poor and had helped to deny aid to such and such a wretch, lest "we set an unfortunate precedent," as the pastor said? Had Jesus not told us that we should give to every man that asks of us? "Him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also." But they sat there and pinched skillings and let people freeze and starve to death so that they might escape heavier taxes. What would Christ say to him on the Day? "I was hungry and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels."

And on the School Board hadn't he voted with the parson on matters that he was really against so that he could be praised for being an enlightened man? Had he not sought honor from the world rather than from God, and made the parson his idol? "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm."

And often he had been ashamed to proclaim his faith in Jesus when he was among people. But

"whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven."

Judgment after judgment rolled in over him, and the Devil stood in the corner and laughed. You lived like a child of the world in all great things, but in little things, that you knew the Lord cared little about, there you were eager to make sacrifices. "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. They are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And if you fast, I shall not hear you cry, and if you offer meat offerings and burnt offerings, I shall take no pleasure in them. And when you spread forth your hands, then I will hide my eyes from you, for your hands are full of blood."

Enok twisted his mouth to one side, threw his arms out as if he would throw himself away, snapped his fingers so violently that he shivered at the noise, looked around to see if anyone had heard him, collected himself and left.

Never before had he prayed morning and night as he now prayed. Anna at times was almost afraid; he used words of his sins and himself that were terrible. As if the Holy Book were no longer strong enough, he laid it aside and prayed in his own words. It was as if he cast himself to earth before God, crept before Him like a worm. In his voice was fear, and despair; his eyes stared fixed and large before him, and the lock of hair on his forehead grew wet with sweat, so that he looked almost out of his mind.

He found no help, however. His despair held on and held on, sometimes better, sometimes worse; there were days when he went about as in a nightmare. Anna wondered whether he was going through

another spell like that which had visited him in the fall of Napolon's death.

He had suddenly acquired an ugly habit: wherever he was, he would suddenly stand stock still, gazing into space, remain standing on the same spot for long periods as if fixed to it, most of all toward evening. She would come out to the stable to milk and find him there standing straight and stiff as a stone. She would go down into the cellar, and without warning he would loom before her like a black shadow against the wall. She was so frightened sometimes that she felt faint afterwards. Once she came on him in the kitchen; he was standing there flinging his arms about and snapping his fingers. . . . It was so strangely terrible that her knees gave way and she had to sit down. "For God's sake, Enok, what's the matter now?"

"Huh?" Enok started. "Is someone there? What is it? Oh, nothing much." He turned and left her with hurried steps, and she heard him snap his fingers again in the hallway.

One day as Enok was in the smithy forging a horseshoe, the Devil beset him with a new temptation. The words stood before him as clearly as if written with fire—he had fallen from Grace. Too long had he been on Tabor; he had fallen asleep there, and then the Devil had stolen into his heart and established himself there, clad as an angel of light, so that Enok wouldn't notice his fall until too late.

Now he had seen it, and now it was too late. His doom stood written in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Chapter 6. "For it is impossible for those

who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost . . . and fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." It is *impossible*.

And the Devil said to him: "You might as well go hang yourself, Enok; now you can just as well go hang yourself. Ha, ha, hang yourself; you might just as well," laughed the Devil.

Enok was seized with terror. He threw himself down before the anvil and screamed, "Lord God, help me! Rebuke me not in Thy wrath; neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. For Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. Satan is upon me like a roaring lion and will devour me. Help! Help! Make haste to save my soul lest I become like them that go down into the pit."

The door opened and Serina stuck her head in. "Lars Danielson has come." The door slammed and Serina rushed away; she had seen her father on his knees by the anvil, white and terrible, with his hands stretched up toward the roof. Enok got up and looked toward Heaven, with tears in his eyes. His prayer was heard; God would help him. A loyal, trusty brother in Christ had He sent—the right man at the right time. . . . "Oh, God and Father," he said with quivering mouth, "as yet You haven't entirely deserted me."



XXII

SPRING had come again; the north wind lifted its oppressive hand from the land, and life quickened. The heather put forth fresh shoots, and the marshes grew green. Dandelions glowed on the hillsides like burning candles. Bluebells opened their blue eyes, shy, beseeching child eyes. Buds swelled and burst; birds began their courting; the children came home from the fields and the marshes, crying with joy, "The lapwing has come, Mother; the lapwing has come."

Instead of the heavy constant drone of the northwest wind, there came the little, whirling spring breezes that blew from all points of the compass, and played with all the living things, with the waves and the flowers, with leaf and heather, with the parson's beard and the maiden's locks, with the grave-wreaths and the bride's veil. Beneath that flickering, dry blast the wettest fen dried, and everything that could grow, grew; everything that could stretch upward put forth new shoots, but everything that was sick bloated and swelled, and bred in itself the twisting spirals of mould that would lead to its death.

Enok was fighting the good fight; he was glad enough to feel that God had not shut off from him the way to His mercy. Lars Danielson and old Guri

had told him that now for the first time was he a true Christian, for now he had the true humility of spirit. They thought that he should be joyful, yes, secure, because God had thought him worthy to be tried in the great fires. Enok was glad, too, or would have been if he could have felt safe. But he alone knew his heart, and he went about with a fear in him that made him walk softly lest he should not have the power to fight the good fight to the end. This fear Lars called the "vigilance of the spirit." God grant that it were so; yes, it was so. But peace? That was what troubled him — he never knew peace.

A strange sense of disquiet came over him; he went about from one thing to another, tried task after task ceaselessly, as if he were fleeing his thoughts. He no longer felt in him the clear witness of the Spirit that showed him God's will and God's meaning; he had only the Scriptures to cling to. But the Scriptures were bewildering, and his spiritual sight was dim; if he did one thing, he found a text to support him, but if he did the opposite, he found a text to support that, too. Sometimes it seemed to him that he was going on blindly.

He tried the "evangelical freedom" that Lars spoke of: no longer laid any emphasis on the small things. Anna was allowed to do what she wished; after a time they gradually drew back to the custom of the rest of the countryside. He thought, however, that he had felt more secure in Grace when he had but followed the witness of the Spirit in his heart. His old fortress against the wiles of the Devil, the words about taking thought for the morrow, had been taken from him. "Take no thought

for the morrow" was not the same as "take no care for the morrow." We should think of the morrow, asserted Lars; only we should not think with any worry. That was probably right, and it eased his conscience. Enok himself had seen that it was not wise to live without foresight, but he had grown weaker and less certain, none the less; it was not always easy for him to distinguish between care and forethought; he often felt himself bowed down with earthly cares. What if the Bridegroom should come and find him sleeping?

He was uncertain, uncertain, and always so lonely. What would happen to him if the Devil should attack him now when it seemed as if he had no backbone? It was a comfort to have Lars in the neighborhood; and Enok no longer denied him the use of the house for prayer meetings. But what was the use of the best help of man when the real struggle came?

That was all that he could expect, however; he could not expect help save from other pious people. It was dangerous, said the parson, to want to go about with his sweet knowledge of peace and of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Look at Sören Soma, for example, who recently had the same idea up in the hill country in Aase, even though he was a Devil's prophet of the worst sort, scorned baptism of children, spoke against Christian and godly deeds, prophesied the coming of the Day of Doom in the teeth of the Scriptures. Finally, he had come forward with the idea of the "spiritual marriage," which oftentimes was not so very spiritual. But he had *peace* and the witness of the Spirit within him.

No, we had to keep to the Word and to the manifestation of the Spirit in the Church. We ought to put our trust in God, hold fast to the Saving Hand even if it were ever so dark both without and within us. That was what God had wanted to show him that first evening, with His wonderful sign of Grace. Put your trust in God and be not cast down, hold simply and truly to the teachings of childhood and the means of Grace, and never so much as listen to the Devil, merely laugh at him, show him the door. "If Satan besets me, I shall show him You as my shield and buckler, and Thy wounds and Thy blood, and straightway he will leave me."

Another important thing was work. God would not have morbid or sick people, but healthy, joyous workmen. He demanded useful works of His children; they must show their faith in deeds. Faith had its life in an active love; we should be good citizens and good workmen. The Devil could be better defeated by hard work than by prayer, as Luther said. Idleness was the way of entrance for the Devil into our hearts.

Enok worked.

The parson, who with true Christian forgiveness was just as kindly even though Enok had opposed him about the reader, got him to hold missionary meetings amongst the farms. There he sat every Sunday afternoon, and read the "Missionary Times," and collected skillings for the holy work. In civil matters he got work enough, too; he was a member of the County Council, and on all sorts of commissions.

He was no less busy with his farm. He began

to break up new ground; he had mistaken God's will when he had stopped that. Together with the parson and Sheriff Aase, he subscribed to an agricultural paper, and from it he learned that in many ways he had treated his soil so that God could not bless his labor even though He had wished it. Enok bought the new-fashioned plows and harrows, and used bonemeal, and other things that formerly he had condemned. We should use the means that God has given us.

It was a good summer with enough rain and warm sun. Perhaps God wanted to comfort him after his harsh punishments of the past two years. "Now when you believe in Me, even though you do not see Me, now I will show you that I am near you." The fine weather held. It was sheer pleasure to look out over the fields and meadows. The rye waved in the summer wind, velvety brown and glittering. The oats, which had not as yet set, stood so heavy that they almost lodged, of a deep green that was almost blue. The hayfields stretched out with timothy and sorrel, and fluttering June grass, like a fine, reddish silken cloth, with here and there flecks of swinging bluebells or caraway blossoms or shining white globe flowers.

The marsh grass whitened along the water-course, together with the delicate, white- and red-spotted blue blossoms of the trefoil. Even the river grew green with flags and sedge grass, and in the back waters the water-lilies floated yellow and white amongst their great flat leaves. Everything grew and blossomed. The earth was like the lap of a great

mother made fruitful by the creative power of the Almighty.

At that time of year it was good to leave the close room, with its hum of flies, and go out. Even on Sundays Enok laid aside his book and went out to worship God in Nature. The moor hen screeched in all his meadows, the stonechat scolded, and the wagtail spluttered. All kinds of birds piped and sang. The world was like a church full of song; everything lifted its voice in praise of God. He tried to see God in all things. "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all."

He loved this plot of earth because he had had it of God. "It's not mine; it's not mine," he murmured to himself. "It is my Father's." What if God demanded that he sell all and . . . Silently and quickly he put the thought aside.

Then evening with its softened colors sank down over hills and tilled lands. From the edge of the sea, the sun shone in over the land, mirrored itself in the window-panes. The tops of the hills shone as if with diamonds. But the sheen was gone when the sun set, and the land sank into peace so deep that it seemed bewitched. He heard the rush of the stream; he heard his own heart-beats. White mists arose and spread here and there; some marsh bird cried afar off; the bleating of the lambs from the pasture sounded like a soft, distant weeping; low through the air hurtled a pair of ducks. Peace, peace, an unending peace; only in Enok's heart was there inquietude.

It came over him at times that he was a stranger

in his own home. Exiled and banished he roamed about — troubled like Cain in a peaceful world. Whatever he thought and wherever he went, there was nothing to turn to, no one to rest beside. A stranger in his own house! No one followed him when he went abroad; no one awaited him when he returned. They turned away when he came near them; they seemed afraid. He could not get a friendly word from his own children, not even if he went on his knees beside them and prayed for one. If he talked to them gently, even spoke of worldly things, of such odds and ends of things as he thought they might like, it was the same. They were shy, seemed ashamed; he had to drag every poor "Yes" and "No" from them; they did not understand that he sought them and would cling to them. And he had only lived after the Word: Whosoever does not hate his father and mother and wife and children, yes, even his own life. . . .

And there was Anna, poor thing. Perhaps he had not done right by her either. He wondered at times if it would have been better if he had married the other girl who had once been his idol. What nonsense! The cunning Devil. . . .

It was a Sunday in haying time. Enok had come home from church and wanted to sit inside for a spell and rest and gossip as he had in the old times, but they were all cold and taciturn. The children looked at him out of the corners of their eyes and wondered if he would not soon go. Enok felt forlorn, as if he were only in the way. He looked around with beseeching eyes, but they all were cold and looked away from him; no one had any use for him.

His face fell; he got up, took his sou'wester and went out. He was hardly outside the door before he heard the children begin to laugh inside. Enok sighed.

He went on and on, backwards and forwards, round and round, saw nothing; he was heavy and depressed. Today Gunnar had been allowed to stay home from church for the second time, but Enok got no thanks for it; his kindness had not helped him. It would not help if he turned against God for their sakes. They hated him; he was merely a stumblingblock for them.

Here and there in the sky were moving masses of clouds; shadows followed them across the hills like flickering, flitting islands of night, like dark and evil thoughts. The hours passed by; Enok wandered about the fields and marshes but paid no attention to the time. Finally he found himself by the Heialand lake. He trembled. What evil thought had dragged him down here? He hastily turned away. Evening came on, but he had no urge to go home. Round about on the hills the plover whistled, a lapwing rose up and flew around with flapping wings, now and then made a cast at his neck as if she wanted to scare him away. The flutter of her wings was harsh and loud like the wing-beats of evil spirits.

In the north, in the east, everywhere and nowhere, invisible and mysterious, the cuckoo gave its hollow, laughing call, an eery laughter that died away in the night above him. From the Heialand lake the loon gave its warning cry, and strange birds that one never saw gave high frightened cries from the knolls and ridges. Were they doomed spirits that

fluttered about so, and gave warning of Death and Doom with their warlock cries in the sleep-heavy night?

But the great black birds that flew so heavily and so silently must be souls that could not tear themselves away from the earth, Mammon servers who were now torn with disquietude, and had to wade out in marsh and fen, and drag up to their nests worms and dirt, heather and straw, and all sorts of refuse, as if they had never got enough of earthly things in life. Perhaps all the birds were spirits. The plover, which sat so alone and whistled from the heather tufts, was perhaps a soul that had lost itself on earth in the sin of love, and now had to wander here, lonesome and without peace, because it had stood between a man and his God. The lapwings might be mothers that had loved their children too much, and had to flutter about here till Doomsday, and shriek and weep for their eggs that the boys took from them. Fool! Did hell not burn hotter than this? Much, much worse would all the earthbound souls and the idolaters have to suffer.

The sun had gone down; a long, fiery beam lay behind it in the north. In the west, banks of blue evening clouds had settled like clear eyes in the green lighted heaven. Over the hills in the south rose a light gray veil of mist.

Then afar in the southwest quivered a lonely red light that shone through the veil of clouds, dead and terrible like a sick eye. A blood star: war, pestilence, sudden and terrible death.... God be merciful to us in Christ's name. Enok hurried home. There was no peace without or within.



XXIII

ONE day in the early fall they were baking at Haave. The house thundered with the noise of the great rolling-pin across the broad baking table. Enok was standing in the cellar kneading the dough when a message came from Uppstad that old Guri wanted to talk with him. She lay on her death-bed, they said, and could scarcely live till evening.

Gunnar took over the kneading trough, and Enok changed his clothes and left the house. Guri was very sick; it was difficult for her to talk and at times she was out of her mind. Enok sat down by the settle-bed where she lay in the corner by the stove, and stayed there till late in the afternoon. The people at Uppstad were slaughtering that day and had little time to be with her.

The old, low room was dark in such gloomy weather, and about the bed there clung an odor so sour and unpleasant that it was disagreeable to stay inside. The south wind whined about the walls, and round about the house rose the harsh chatter of crows and magpies that had assembled to the slaughter from all the farms in the neighborhood.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever," Enok comforted her.

"Now you must think of the Star in the East . . . that may perhaps lead you to the Child."

"Oh, oh," sighed a thin, half whispering voice from the bed.

"And now we must pray, Guri.

*"When the eyes grow dim and the daylight pales,
When the ears are closed and the hearing fails,
When the tongue is reft of speech and word,
And the anguished heart with fear is stirred,
When my brain is darkened and fails at last,
When the time for help from man is past,
Thy help, O Jesus, down to me send;
Stand by my side in my latter end.'"*

"Yes, yes."

"Now aren't you glad, Guri, . . . that so soon now you can expect the Bridegroom?"

"I am longing . . ." the voice whispered, "to leave here . . . oh —"

"Yes, think, in a little time perhaps . . . you will be up there and see God face to face . . . the many thousands of angels and the Lamb on His Throne, and the twelve thousand sealed ones. . . . Then you must pray for me, Guri."

She did not answer; she had closed her eyes and lay as if asleep. Her breath rattled painfully in her yellow, wrinkled throat. He trembled when she did not answer. Didn't she want to pray for him? The fearful words of the Apostle John came to him: "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it." Did she see that that was the sin he had committed?

"Christian?" whispered Guri and opened one eye painfully. "Is that you, Christian?" She groped about in the air with her hands.

The poor thing was raving. She was thinking of her son who had been lost some years before in the fishing. "God help her to think only of You now.

*"O what precious balm and healing,
Jesus, in Thy wounds I find!
Every hour that I am feeling
Pains of body and of mind.'"*

He read through the whole hymn, half for her and half for himself, with trembling voice. Perhaps she would die now? "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." Be faithful unto death. . . . Be faithful unto death. . . .

After a time she awoke and asked for water. There was no water in the house, and he ran out and found a cup, lifted her in her bed and let her drink.

"You are good to me . . . aahh."

"Jesus will be even kinder to you when you come to Him."

"Yes . . . ah."

"I should think that it would be easy for you to leave this world, Guri, where there is no longer anything for you to cling to."

"No . . . since the last one died . . . aah . . . then, parted from everything. Aah . . . aah, Come . . . Lord Jesus."

"Amen. . . . And now you must try to turn all your thoughts to the Saviour. And see that no earthly thoughts are mingled with your yearning to

leave the world. See that it isn't your children that you are longing to meet — I mean, more than the Bridegroom. Ah, we can never be too vigilant; the Devil is ravening after us, Guri . . ."

"Yes, yes . . . aah."

"You must try to see if you can't bow yourself wholly beneath God's mighty hand; even if you shouldn't find your children in Heaven, you must still have the same burning longing, and praise God with all your heart. If you can do that, you can know that you are adorned and ready to go to meet your Bridegroom."

"Aah . . . aah."

"Do you think that you feel that way?"

"Yes, but I know that I'll find . . . Christian."

"And I hope so, too. But if you shouldn't find him, if you can only know within your heart that you would be rejoiced even then! I have tried so much, Guri, and I know how dangerous it is . . . and how soon we can deceive ourselves."

"Yes, yes, but God has saved . . . Christian."

"God shall save us all in His mercy, amen, for Jesus Christ's sake and His blood. . . . Amen."

"Aah . . . aah . . . aah . . . aah."

Guri grew uneasy, lay moaning and twisting, wanted to say something. Her whole body shook. Afraid and pale he bowed over her. . . .

"Do you think . . . that I am doomed . . . if I think . . . of my children?"

"When you do your best, Guri, to keep your heart pure . . . and believe with all your heart on the Blood of Jesus, then God will forgive you all your sins. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as

white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as . . .” He stopped suddenly.

She had changed, struggled and struggled as if she wanted to get up; a deep, dark blue passed over her face; then she lifted her head with a sudden jerk and looked at him . . . stared . . .

Her great, glassy eye stared up at him so that he grew stiff with fright; the hair rose on his head, his hands shook. . . . What did she see? What did she see? Then the head fell back; the toothless mouth gaped upward gasping. . . . He had got up and did not notice it; his knees shook under him; he stumbled out, shaking, half fainting.

Jonas Uppstad’s wife started when she met Enok outside the door; he was green in the face.

What had she seen? He was so weak on the way home that it was a comfort to him to meet even Gypsy Tomas, who declared that, according to his deepest knowledge, the sin against the Holy Ghost was the sin against nature, the First Book of Moses, the thirty-eighth chapter from the eighth to the tenth verses. But the great, dying eye so tormented Enok that he paid little attention to Tomas.



XXIV

GUNNAR had been confirmed, and now the Devil could take all this Biblical stuff; he was a grown man and was going to learn to swear, for, by God, he was so tired of all this godliness and all these books, that they stank in his nostrils. (When he got old, he'd have time enough to think about such things.)

He expected a letter from Carolus soon, and when the letter came, he had only to steal off some evening while they were sleeping and get to the town, and then aboard at once, and then they could do what they would. . . . Out they'd go on the wide, free sea, perhaps to Arabia.

But Gunnar had to wait a long time for a letter, and finally, on a market day, he heard the news that Carolus had come home. Gunnar went about waiting for a word for a week. Would he be over soon? Wasn't that he down the road? Finally, one day when his father was attending a meeting of the Board of Assessors, Gunnar sneaked off south to the gypsy hut in the hills. Red and breathless he at last arrived, and found that he hardly knew Carolus. He had grown up. He looked fine in his seaman's gear, though his peajacket was badly worn and his duck trousers were patched. There had come a strange and foreign expression over his face, and he

had a new swing to his talk: he said "aye" instead of "yes," and "a whole lot" instead of "many," and "scared" instead of "afraid," and many other fine words — Gunnar was ashamed of his country speech. Carolus had rings in his ears seaman-wise, and on his hand just above his thumb were an anchor and a heart tattooed in blue. Under them stood the letters C.M.T. That was so that he could be known if he was lost at sea, he said. And on his chest was tattooed a whole ship, which Gunnar was allowed to see, and on his arm, a girl. Hadn't it hurt to have them pricked on? . . . Not so you would notice it.

The conversation was halting. Gunnar did not dare mention his hope, and Carolus evaded telling the truth. The gypsy room was a wretched place, black and untidy and full of straw and rubbish. The children whined and bickered and went unpunished, and Gunhild, their mother, wobbled about half drunk. Finally Gunnar got Carolus to walk a piece up the road with him.

Then Carolus began to tell of how terrible it was at sea. They had dreamed of the "free sea," but it was much worse at sea than any place on land, worse even than Haave. On the large ships, it was worse than he had had it; he had spoken with many sailors about it. Now he had come home for good, was going to give up the sea. He would get work in town at one of the piers or warehouses; that would be much easier. . . . With all his might he would advise Gunnar to give the sea up, too — he wouldn't be able to find any place, either.

Gunnar felt cold and deserted. He had thought

of it so long and taken pleasure in the idea. . . . What would he do now?

"If I were you, Gunnar," said Carolus, "I'd go to town and apprentice myself to a carpenter, or work in a store if you like it better. There you'd have a little time to yourself and could have some fun, and in a few years you would earn as much money as you could at sea in your whole life. When you're not a captain . . . and country folk are never made captains."

That was the only comfort that Gunnar had, but as a parting gift, Carolus gave him a claspknife with a brass handle and a corkscrew and three blades, and that consoled him somewhat. He began to think of the store. It would be fun to work there, and perhaps he could go to sea later on. But there was Father. Getting leave from him to do what one wanted to do . . . uff. If he were only full grown!

Gunnar was more sullen than usual the next few days; it seemed as if every way of escape was closed to him.

"Is something troubling you, Gunnarman?" asked his father. Uff, that disgusting, wheedling tone that he'd begun to use lately. Gunnar had much rather that he would scold him.

"No," he answered shortly.

His father sighed. "I think that it's so sad that you can't tell me anything, Gunnar. You might talk to me a little."

Gunnar sulked. What would I talk to you about? he thought.

"Are you angry with me, Gunnar?" Gunnar twisted uneasily; what sort of talk was that? His

father sighed long and heavily, and then left him.

Gunnar avoided his father more and more; his father was really queer lately, went about his work as if he were half crazy. Gunnar could not understand the reason for it and was both afraid and angry. He felt relieved that his father was away more than usual and that Torkjell Tualand was there most of the time; he worked for them every other week. It was a help, too, that his father was not so strict about Sunday as he had been, and that Gunnar could do almost as he wished in the evenings.

He often went out and mingled with the young people on the farms nearby, did not want to be tied by apron strings any longer. But he did not have such a good time as he had thought he would. He could not be one of the rest; they had a different way with them, almost another speech. They laughed every minute, and he did not really know what they laughed at, and sometimes they made fun of him. God, what words they could use! Words that he had thought up himself were of no use there. The maid at Helge's, a girl from the south who had just moved into the parish, said to him once, "I can see that you have grown up with gypsies." The others laughed so that he was embarrassed, and sometimes they chaffed the girls in word and deed so that he hardly knew where to look. Was that a common custom?

One Sunday he went down to Heialand to a dance. He could not dance, though, and stood around by himself. No one paid any attention to him, and no one talked to him. He felt like an outcast or a stranger. In a pause between two dances,

he was insulted. Olina, who also had been confirmed in the fall, started out to make a fool of him. She made mock of the prayer meetings that went on at Enok's house. "Every time that you go by his house, you can hear a bellowing like what comes from a stable when you're feeding the cows: 'Moo, moo-o-o-o,' they bellow, and little Gunnar joins in with his squeal: 'Eeeeeee e-e-e-e,' he goes, and then they get down on their knees — that's why they have to wear leather breeches so they won't wear holes in the knees too quickly, ha, ha, ha." Gunnar stalked out and went home red with anger. He'd never think of Olina more. He would rather have Justine Haaland, anyway, if he could. No, not her, either; she'd been short with him when they were at the parson's together last time, and was setting her cap for Napolon Storbrekke's son. He'd not have any of them. Let the devil take them, one and all.

The only person that was really kind to Gunnar was Maren, the maid. She agreed with him that the young people round about were a stuck up lot, depend on that. In the dusk while Maren milked and he fed the cows, they talked together, mostly of marriage and such things, and Gunnar began to like that sort of talk. Maren was strict; she had never slept with anyone yet, even though many had tried to get her to, and she would never be shamed, either. It was pretty hard for anyone to have a love child. "Look at Helmik Heialand, the widow's son; he goes around like an outcast; nobody will have anything to do with him, and he can't think of getting married. Who would have him? That's just because he had that bastard a couple of years ago."

Gunnar knew that; there seemed to be something downright horrid about Helmik; and he shunned people as best he could, too. "And you can see that for girls it's much worse."

"But why aren't there more bastards?" Gunnar wondered,—*"the way they're acting all the time."*

"That's true," said Maren thoughtfully. She had a soft, husky voice and talked in a hushed tone that suggested passion ill-suppressed. Her face was plump and round, her forehead low and narrow, her mouth fresh, her teeth were white and large. "I've seen it happen a good many times, but you see, they know what to do and how to act."

"Yes, but how do they do it?" asked Gunnar with trembling voice.

"Oh, they manage."

He asked and asked, but she was stubborn and would not say anything more.

One evening she asked him if she shouldn't teach him to dance; they could find a place, perhaps in the hay-loft on Sundays in the evening. He turned pale and agreed, and there followed a time that was none too good for Gunnar.

Toward Christmas there came enough snow for sledding, and Gunnar helped his father drive up the peat turves. It was heavy, exhausting work in snow and wind and so cold that their noses smarted. The sky was filled with snow-laden clouds; the air was gray and dead, and the whole land still with frost. Gunnar shivered and froze in the sleety wind, his eyes watering with the cold and the blown particles of peat dust. He did not have any time to himself to think about girls, and went about growling at

his father who would always go out in the worst weather. He liked least of all the loading on the marsh. He was continually afraid that his father would begin his wheedling or begin to tell moral tales about keeping the baptismal covenant, or start with his old questions about Jesus: whether he loved Jesus; whether he had prayed to God today or not. Every time they had got the sleds loaded and each could drive his own horse, he felt relieved and drew freer breath. He realized that his father was brooding about something, and at last he came out with it.

"I'm wondering, Gunnar, what you go about thinking of these last few days. Couldn't you bring yourself to tell me about it? Hm?"

"Ahem." Gunnar was red in the face. His father could not know anything of what was going on between him and Maren.

"It's not as it was when I was little," sighed Enok. "I remember so well. . . . My father wasn't one to talk much, and all we children went about trying to think of ways to make him talk, and when we had got him to talk with us a little, we were as happy as birds. Won't you talk to your father when he asks you to?"

Gunnar did not see how he could. What should he talk about? He knew that it was not of any use to talk about anything but pious matters. He had heard often enough that he would have to account for every useless word and he had often been vexed because everything that he said was used as a basis for texts or moral lessons.

"Now that you've been confirmed," began Enok

again, "you should put away childish things; you should be thinking of the future like other lads. You've got the farm, of course, but I had that, too, and still I went about full of dreams and thoughts: how I had best use my youth so that I'd have money enough to get along with when I took over the farm. Don't you ever feel that way?"

Gunnar was amazed to hear his father talk in such a worldly way and so to the point. Perhaps he could tell him what... Far from it. "Oh, one can always think, but I don't believe it would be of any use if I told about it." He was grim.

Enok sighed. "Wouldn't it be of any use... to talk with your father about it? It seems strange to me to hear that."

Gunnar grew grimmer. "When I want to do anything, it's always wrong, it seems to me." His voice sounded angrier than he had meant it to be.

Enok said never a word in reply. They drove home, and Gunnar regretted that he had been so short with his father. Who knows but that he would have got permission if he had asked?

As they stood by the peat shed unloading, Gunnar moved nearer to his father than usual; he wanted to be asked once again. I'll have to begin myself this time, thought Gunnar. Father's been so strange lately; who knows? Time after time he stood with the words on the tip of his tongue, but he hesitated till it was too late. He would have to wait till they got back to the marshes. But when they had got there, he had lost his courage again. It would be of no use.

"What was it you meant when you said you had thought of something?" began his father again. "Can't you tell me?" His last words sounded forced. "You don't believe, do you, that I want to hurt you? Perhaps I've been too strict with you, but you have never thought . . . that my intentions weren't good?" Enok's voice sounded strained.

"No," whispered Gunnar with an effort. Uff, it was terrible. But it was unbelievable, to hear that from his father. Think! he had admitted that he had been strict. Something warm and soft stole into Gunnar's heart. To overcome it he began with all his might. "Well, I meant that I wanted to go to town and work in a store for a time, so that I could learn a little and earn a few skillings. I'm getting to be a regular clodhopper staying here." He wondered at the boldness of his own words.

Enok's face lighted up; Gunnar had spoken pleasantly. "Yes, Gunnar," he said, and hid the joy in his voice. "That's not a bad idea. It would be worth your while to go out and learn something, and if we could get you in with some known and trustworthy man . . . See there. You must never be afraid to come to me with your ideas; you know that I want to . . . help you along. We'll see what we can do, Gunnar."

That day Gunnar felt almost affectionate toward his father.

Toward evening in the dusk, he was standing in the barn chopping out some hay for the sheep. Enok was bedding and feeding the horses. Suddenly he came over to his son, threw his arms around him and drew him to him. "I love you so, Gunnar," he

whispered to him. "You don't know how much . . ."
Then he let Gunnar go and stroked his head and
left him. Gunnar stood there as if he wanted to sink
into the earth.



XXV

GUNNAR went to town. Enok had thought often enough that it was unwise to humor the boy in his fleshly lust, to cast him out into the world with all its temptations and its allurements—as young as he was, to throw him straight into the jaws of Leviathan. But he could not break his word; Gunnar would have thought that it was pure meanness.

He had been so pleasant to his father lately that it would have been unreasonable to oppose him. It was painful, of course, to see that he went away so willingly, but children were that way; they did not know any better. His mother supported Gunnar; she thought that Gunnar was not faring any too well at home. . . . “In many ways,” she said in a peculiar tone. Enok looked at her sharply; no, she was not hiding anything, but there was certainly danger at home; boys were thoughtless, and if that wench Maren had got the idea in her head that she could be the housewife at Haave sometime. . . . Enok brooded, remembered his own youth—there was nothing there to be proud of. It would be best to get the boy off the farm. But after Gunnar had gone, Enok had his misgivings. Now once again he had knowingly sinned. Once again Gunnar had become his idol. And in the Scriptures was written clearly

enough: For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.

Lars Danielson had to use all his power to quiet him, and then in a few days he would be brooding again.

The sixth child came; it was a girl, and Enok saw a bad omen in that. "And there are so many of us now; where'll we get the food for so many mouths?" he groaned. Anna was sickly and weak, and had to have Gypsy Gunhild in to cup her, and that worried Enok. "It's I who have destroyed you," he said. "I have killed my wife, and I have sent my son to the devil; so it's not to be wondered at that God has turned His back on me."

Jesen's Reader had been adopted in the school despite his protest, and there again had God destroyed his work. His influence grew less and less in the County Council, he thought, and the great work that he had dreamed of — the redemption of the gypsies — became more and more a laughing-stock. Tomas used his house only in the winter; in the summer his troupe wandered about as they had before, and when they were home, all sorts of things went on there — drinking and fighting and worse, so that it was terrible to think that he had helped bring such a crew into the parish. A curse was upon all that he undertook.

The farm ran down from year to year. He could not do all that he should, and God no longer helped him. Anna was sickly and could not look after the house as she had before. The wrath of God, the wrath of God! They would be on the parish in a

year or two. He talked so wildly sometimes that Anna had to scold him. And sometimes it seemed to help.

Two years went in this way — up and down, up and down, like the long, slow swell of the sea below them. When Enok was in good fettle, he was energetic enough: he broke up new ground, built a new stable, bought Rasmiss Skare's farm for a summer pasture, tried all sorts of new things, and was busy from morning to night. "God wanted His children to be industrious and capable. We should overcome the Devil with hard work." He had spells when he bought almost everything that he saw. They should have a kerosene lamp instead of the old train oil one. He brought back a new stove from the town, one with three stories to it, and a door, to be fired from the living-room. He bought a new cariole, and traded horses and cows. He had no peace, had to have something to do all the time.

There were many auctions now: the bank came and took people's farms, the sheriff foreclosed mortgages and sold farms for taxes, and many auctioned off their property and sailed for America. Enok attended them all, and came home with all sorts of junk, stuff that was of no use and no value, that he had "got so cheap." Worst of all was the spring when Möller at Myre went bankrupt. Enok was at the auction for two days and came home with a wagon full of all kinds of things: a mowing machine, a churning machine, a straw-chopping machine, and strange new machines for scientific farming. Anna forgot to hold her tongue and asked, "Why, what in the world will you do with all that, Enok?"

He stood for a space staring at it, then grimaced and snapped his fingers. "It is folly altogether, altogether, altogether."

Anna had to comfort him the best she could.

But when his bad spells came, he gave right up. He was doomed and lost. And he raved of hell and the parish dole. He found all sorts of strange things to worry about, all without basis. One day he "had cast Gunnar out into the sea of the world to be devoured by the Devil"; the next day God had wanted to "save Gunnar from his father.—He saw that his father was destroying him body and soul, and so He had to take him from me." At times it was Gunnar who had been the wise one. "Wise lad, he saw that things were going wrong with me and that God had cursed me, that it was best for him to keep away lest he be ruined too."

A bit of gossip that Gunhild brought them one day—that Gunnar had begun to go around with a woman—nearly drove Enok out of his senses for a while. "A curse lies over my whole house; God will afflict and reject my whole line; . . . visit my iniquity upon my children to the thousandth generation." Often Anna had to give up and say nothing.

He worried about every little thing. Serina had been confirmed; she had grown up to be a beautiful girl, straight, slim, and well-mannered, and when Enok became aware of it he got the fixed notion that she was bound to go wrong. After that, she was hardly allowed out. He did not even want her to go to church.

Tönes Tualand, the schoolmaster, had taken to hanging about the house lately, and finally Enok

had suspected that he was after Serina. One evening he came on them behind the barn, standing talking together in low voices. When Enok came, they turned red and looked embarrassed, and soon afterwards Tönes said goodnight and left. Enok burst out into wild and harsh accusations. "What are you running after that cottager's son for? Huh? What were you doing with him in the barn, huh?" He looked so wild that she grew frightened and ran into the house, with Enok after her, muttering and excited. He found Anna in the kitchen and raved to her about it.

Anna was indignant. "You ought to know how matters stand before you begin to shame the child with such witless talk," she said. "Time after time she has told Tönes, and she did once more tonight, that there could be nothing between them, and if you don't believe that, I can tell you that everybody else knows it's true, and that Tönes has almost gone out of his mind because of it, goes wandering up and down the hills all day clean beside himself, and sends Serina letters with half crazy verses in them. Here, you can see for yourself." She went into the other room and came back with a paper that she gave to Enok to read. Serina had hidden herself.

Enok looked at the verses; was Tönes trying to make a fool of him? He wrote in the country dialect.

*The fields are cold and gray;
The wind sighs overhead.
God help me, a poor sinner,
I would that I were dead.*

*They strive and strive and strive
In endless struggle and pain.
God save me, a poor sinner,
I would that I lay in my grave.*

*The preacher stands and preaches,
The teacher sits and writes.
God comfort me, a sinner,
Who lives through sleepless nights.*

*The maiden laughs and dances
And lies by a beggar's side.
God bless me, a sinful wretch,
It were better I had died.*

*Farewell, you weary world;
My troubles soon shall cease.
The bright blue sea lies before me,
And in its depths there is peace.*

Enok stuck the paper in his pocket and went out. Hm! Anna had the confidence of the children; they went to her with all their troubles; but none of them came to him. They were afraid of him; he was left out in the cold—shut out; he was a stranger in his own house. He snapped his fingers.

That summer it rained continually. For six weeks it rained without a break. The sky bent down across the hills with the great weight of the rain clouds; the earth was flooded as if there was no longer to be any difference between the water above and the water below. The clouds ringed them about;

the sky drew together into a vast sack, and out in the eternal rain mist, the sea loomed dark. Terrible thunder-storms passed over the parish with terrific rains and crackling lightnings; they lasted for days. The swollen streams washed sand and pebbles and driftwood over all the low-lying fields, floated off the cut hay and gouged out the meadows. Hay stood in cocks and burned with the mould, and haying was stopped everywhere.

At times it seemed as if the Lord would take pity on them. The sun rose in the morning, clear-washed and bright, and the sky was as bright and blue as the unruffled surface of a lake. People went out into the fields, opened the cocks and spread the hay; perhaps the rain would hold up till evening, if not longer. But the old men shook their heads. The sun was too red, and its warmth too muggy and hot; and the dewless meadows were not a good sign; there was little hope. Toward noon small clouds would dot the sky here and there; cloud banks rose in the south and southeast. The little clouds grew larger and collected in masses; the mountains darkened and the sea turned black. The sun struggled and struggled, but its light grew pale. "Oh, God, let Thy face shine upon us," cried Enok to the heavens, where he was still searching for a blue fleck. But the black-blue sea of clouds spread across the zenith; the sun gave up and hid its face. The first heavy drops fell like hopeless tears. People threw themselves at the hay as if it were a matter of life and death, and put it up in cocks in a wild haste; though it was half-rotten or rotting, they tumbled it up. Above their heads rolled peal after

peal of thunder, and the rain spurted down in torrents. Wet as crows they had to get into their houses, change clothes and dry out.

The hay stood in cocks until it was black, and toads and frogs built nests in it, lived high and had sons and daughters. A sour odor of rotting hay spread over the land like a pestilence; the standing grass lodged and rotted on its stems, and the grain did likewise. The finest fields had to be cut and used for green fodder.

Enok went about, closed in by many waters, tormented by a fear that he could not deal with. The latter days were upon them. The air grew dark and black, was filled with water and fire; the heaven was closed; the sun could no longer give forth its light. The ordering of the world ceased, and it ran wild. God had forgotten His covenant with Noah, and was going to drown the world once again. It was not without meaning that there had been such a roaring of the surf all winter, and so many fearful shooting stars. He lay through dark nights, and trembled, while the thunder rolled above his roof tree, and the rain came down like a cataract. The river swelled and swelled; soon it would reach his house walls; then it would rise more and more till it would tear them away out into its tumbling yellow torrent, out, out into the roaring sea.

One night he was terror-stricken. From all quarters of the heaven fire gleamed and flashed, a fire like sulphur, a fire like blood, and a fire like the swinging white swords of the Cherubim; and the thunder rolled and pealed like the Day of Doom, burst out into roars like the noise of a great gun,

like great shrieks, tremendous shrieks of anguish, that burst the arch of the sky. Then sometimes it seemed as if the thunder were on the earth, bumping and leaping about like a rolling mountain, or tossing along as through wide seas. Flash after flash of lightning, and crash after crash of thunder, while the rain spurted and poured down with a pounding like that of galloping horses! The air was a howling sea of rain; Heaven and Earth wailed together, in anguish over the wrath to come.

"Cross of Jesus, Cross of Jesus!" prayed Anna and Enok under the bedclothes. Finally there came a crash so that the house quivered. "Lord Jesus!" screamed Enok, tumbled up out of bed as if he were searching for help — white as a corpse. There was the smell of sulphur, the world was crashing.... "The matches are in the cupboard," called Anna. He struck a light, found Johan Arndt, threw himself down on his bare knees, read the prayer, "Against Fear of the Last Day," while the heavens rumbled from corner to corner of the sky as if the world were loosed from its foundations.

His voice quivered as the light grew pale in the sharp, singeing flash of the lightning, and he felt the floor give under his knees when the heaviest crashes came, as hard and heavy as the quakings of the earth. They died away and then came again but toward morning grew quiet, though there were still dying mutterings and murmurs round about, like an even, deadened, but always alert and forward pressing forecast of God's great wrath.

When Enok went out in the morning, he saw a terrible sight. The hair rose on his head; he stood

as if struck witless, lost all power of moving — so near had the Lord been to them that night; the footprints of the Lord of Sabaoth lay right outside his door. The lightning had struck down, and the old willow stood stripped and stark with a broken top. The limbs were torn off all down one side. The abomination of desolation! The abomination of desolation! Then the lightning had made a jump from the tree out onto the field, thrown over a fence, bored a hole in the earth, gone further on, made another hole, so on away, hole after hole, less and less. The earth had been uprooted and upturned as if by a terrible and raging boar of gigantic size.

He was so changed, so greenish gray in the face and so wild-eyed when he came rushing in, that Anna screamed, "What is it, Enok?"

"Doom, doom," he said hoarsely, "doom."



XXVI

A LONG period of time had elapsed, and wonderful and sorrowful were the changes in the world: both Tomas and Carolus had turned again to the gypsy trail. A girl had led Carolus astray; her name was Katrine, and she was the daughter of Lapp-Barbro. Carolus had happened to meet her at his home in the Ramstad hills, and she had "fallen for him." Then the womenfolk had given him a love potion, and from that day it was all over with Carolus Magnus. He suddenly gave up his work, and more and more frequently he went with her on her wanderings. She soon showed that she bore a child of his under her girdle, and the end of it all was that he came to follow her about all the time. Tomas was inconsolable; Carolus had been his one comfort; now nothing made any difference any longer.

He was none too well off himself; he could not make any use of the land given to him; he had to live on parish doles and by begging now and again, and grew ever the more lazy. His house had become a regular gypsy camp. All his old friends stopped there, and with them came strong drink and cards, so that Tomas at last lost all touch with the outside world. His wife grew sick and bored with staying in one place so long and took to the bottle; at the

last she had to have her spirits every day to keep going.

The children went the same way. The eldest girl thought only of getting a sweetheart and a young one, and as soon as she was old enough she struck up a partnership with Olaves Didricksen and took to the long trail. The two youngest — Else and Frederik — stayed at home and learned all the worst vices: they stole whiskey and drank; they lay on the hill behind the house and bickered, and learned the art of love. Tomas sometimes came out in fatherly wrath and beat them almost to death, but then their mother in a drunken rage assaulted Tomas.

Finally came the sorrowful day when Tomas lost his wife. She died in a delirium one day according to the mysterious ways of God, and though her departure seemed good in some ways, Tomas soon understood that, without a wife, he was worse off than before. Eventually he saw that he was driven by the grim necessity of fate to take Else and Frederik with him and leave his hut, which now stood cold and empty, full of sorrowful memories. He joined Carolus on the road — the only reasonable thing to do. "Strange are the ways of the world," said Gypsy Tomas.

Things went well as long as Lapp-Barbro lived. In many ways she took the place of a wife for Tomas, and she had such various talents that she could nearly feed the whole troupe herself. Especially was she skilled in witchcraft. When they were in out-of-the-way places — back in the fjords or in the hills — she could oftentimes earn both food and

money by reciting charms over children or curing the green sickness. Many a good joint of meat and many a good old garment she got for telling fortunes with cards, or by showing girls crazy to be married the men that they would get, or by other small arts. But then God in His unsearchable wisdom decreed that she should die, and after that day things got worse and worse. One could not thrive even on the gypsy trail without a wife.

Katrine was clever enough; she had some of the skill of her mother in magic and could use it if necessary. She was, on the whole, a fine woman when she was not drunk, but the troupe was too large and the times were hard.

The menfolk were of no use: Tomas was too old; his fingers were too stiff and his eyes none too good. He could do no fine work now, and other sorts paid too little. Carolus himself had learned too little of the gypsy ways, but at times he made journeys to lonely places where he held revival meetings and earned a little that way, though he soon became known.

Gypsy Tomas sold garment after garment from his own and the children's backs so that he could get coffee and tobacco, and most of the money he earned went the same way. Soon he was making the round of the parishes, "looking worse than a Swede." If they earned anything, they went straight to the nearest town, and lived high with plenty of food and whiskey till they had nothing left save the clothes they stood up in.

For the most part they kept to the coast lands and to the region around Stavanger. Farther to the

east than that revival meetings and witchcraft were of little use. Everywhere, now, that old belief that gypsies could cast spells was waning; people learned too much now. If they kept to the same locality too long, people became indifferent to them, and there was ever the less to win by begging. Often they had to spend the night in an outhouse or in a hay-loft; but in cold weather it was unpleasant enough to lie down at night in half-soaked clothes in hay or straw, and downright suffering to get up when they could not get so much as a mouthful of coffee. They did not dare build a fire in a loft, and their bottles were empty by the time they had been a day away from a town.

It was a sour winter with slush and bad going, and an icy cold wind. They slowly worked south along the coast in their old boat, often lying weather-bound. Finally they reached Stavanger, and Katrine sold some knitted things. They had suffered so long, that they thought they could let themselves have a regular celebration. They drank and foregathered with old friends till they did not have a whole garment on their backs. Then they straggled out over the ridge behind the town in the freezing cold wind and almost froze to death, looking so terrible that people were afraid of them. One patch overlaid another; their naked bodies poked out here and there; matted hair stuck up in tufts over their heads or dangled down over their blue, frozen, blackened faces; it was easy to see that the lice were having their own way with them. Katrine had drawn on all the rags that she could get hold of, but she could barely hide all that should be hidden. Little Else

they had wrapped in an old man's coat with a string around the waist. Tomas was the worst off; he shivered in a tattered nightgown that hardly hung together, and his trousers, hardly more than patch on patch and hole after hole, were held up by a cord across one shoulder. The only thing about him that was sound was an old sou'wester that he had on his head; he had found that on a scarecrow in a field near Haugesund.

Young Tomassen was the most respectable of them all; he had on a hat, and a faded red handkerchief was knotted around his throat. He was a strange figure to see now. He stood a head taller than his father, tall and slender, loose-jointed and lithe. He walked with his hands in his pockets, and swayed and dipped like a boat mast in a choppy sea. His little head sat like a button high on a long brown neck. His face was round and flat, like the dial of a clock, freckled and weatherbeaten, with a skin like parchment. On his jaws and above his upper lip grew a stiff, thin reddish beard. His eyes were little, dark, and shifty, and his skull was small, round, high-domed like that of a child. From his father he had inherited the loose, cunning expression and the sudden shift from wild merriment to a smug gravity. On one cheek was a large scar.

He was clad in a blue coat of loosely woven coarse homespun. His coat was a little out at the elbows but whole except for the rent in it straight across the front that it had got in the town when he had been with Olaves Didricksen. It was a trick of Olaves — a stroke with his knife across the stomach so clean that the point just scraped the skin. Katrine

had caught the two edges together as best she could with wool thread, but the coat skirts still dangled as if they were about to fall off. But there was no hope for his trousers; they were mended up and down and crossways, and all unraveled around the ankles.

Everything was wrong with them. The children coughed like sheep; old Tomas was bothered by his rheumatism; Katrine and Carolus had colds. The children were shrieking with chilblains and hunger, and little Tomas, whom Katrine was carrying on her back, almost froze. They had to stop again and again and lie down with the child between them and thaw him out with the warmth of their own bodies. It looked as if they could not live through the winter, and Katrine began to wonder aloud why the devil she should have two great Morsar* around when they had no help to offer. Else, who for all her twelve years was ready with her tongue, added her sneers. The two men understood well enough what the women meant, and glanced sideways at one another with uncomfortable, wary eyes.

What troubled them worst of all, though, was that they had come to an end of their tobacco. They had bought a roll in Stavanger, but Olaves Didricksen must have stolen that from them. Old Tomas walked along munching shreds from the bottom of his pocket, and swore and cursed in an ugly humor; he had forgotten all his philosophy and his "points of view." Carolus had seized the opportunity to grab up a bit of tobacco from a house where they

* Menfolk.

had turned in to beg, but he kept it hidden from his father; there was not enough to divide, he thought.

One morning Tomas was pretty badly off. They had spent the night in a cottager's hut, but the man of the house was away, and there was not even a smell of tobacco in the whole house. All of Tomas's pocket fodder had been eaten, and he paced back and forth, and twisted and grimaced, so crazy for tobacco that he was beside himself. He growled at his son, "You must have a bit on you. You've got a few crumbs in your pocket if you haven't anything else."

But Carolus lay writhing with the cold on a straw mattress. "No, I haven't; I swear I haven't."

The old man whined and sniffed in corners and searched high and low in the room and out in the kitchen, but he could not find anything. He came in to his son again, faint and wild. "May the Devil tear you to pieces if you don't get your father a chew, you beast."

"Oh, shut up," yelled Carolus, "or I'll teach you to."

Just then the old man found Carolus's trousers in a corner and searched through them, seam by seam; he finally found the little lump that was still left. He thrust it into his mouth with a wolfish snarl and rushed toward the door. But Carolus understood the trick well enough and grabbed his father by the foot so that he fell full length. Then arose a hubbub and clamor of swearing fit for no human ear.

"What are you trying to do, you devil?"

"So, you're trying to hide tobacco from your father, you swine."

They lay struggling on the floor till it looked as if they would tear one another asunder. Finally the father got hold of his son and clamped down so that the son howled in agony. Katrine and Else threw themselves between them with curses and shrieks. The whole house was in an uproar; the cottager's wife came rushing in and asked if she should send for the sheriff. At last they were parted on the condition that the father should split his chew in two and give his son half.

They set off with the intention of taking the way to the hill country; in Vaadal they would meet Olaves Didricksen and his troupe. It was cold and clear that day, and father and son, as they straggled along the road in the bright, frost-blue winter air, each with his bit of quid in his mouth, fell into a comfortable and gossiping mood.

Old Tomas was as spry and alert from the effects of the little scrap of tobacco as if he had had a good dram. He spoke with his old pomposity of the conditions of the time and of the disappointments of life. When he looked back on his former days and thought how he must wander about now with his family like a factotum, if he might use so ugly a word, many meditations came to him and glimpses of the future, meditations both on the ordering of the world and of man's malice. Carolus was wondering what his father was driving at now. "Yes, if I only knew of some way out, I'd not wait to take it," he ventured cautiously. They looked at one another with a searching glance.

Old Tomas went on, his head bobbing and swinging on its stalk. "I'll not praise myself, but I

can say that I have kept my way straight and my hands free of all that wasn't mine. I always kept before me the idea that you should never go against the Lord as long as you can help it; so now I walk before God in my nine-and-fiftieth year, and can safely challenge any man, and not one in a thousand can answer me. There is not one who could stand before Tomas Fredericksen with so much as he can put on the little end of a shovel handle and say, 'This has Tomas Fredericksen taken from me unrighteously.' "

He glanced tentatively at his son; his face had its old sly cast, and his eyes were squinted up so that barely the white showed. "So that I can say," he continued, in his gentlest tone, "that if anything should happen to me like that, I would still be a better man than Olaves Didricksen and other friends of ours."

Carolus Magnus burst out into loud, long laughter—a glad laughter. Then he said, "You haven't earned much for your upright life, Father; they live better at the pago * than we do."

Old Tomas laughed too, a glad laughter, and they glanced sideways at one another with understanding eyes. "You must not talk so light-mindedly, Carolus," the old man warned him. "This is a sorrowful and mysterious thing for us, and the purposes of God are not intelligible to us. But anyway, maybe there's no question of the pago," he said in his everyday voice.

"It's all the same," said Carolus hurriedly.

* Jail.

"When the laborer didn't get the half skilling that he needed to live by, he had to protect himself as best he could."

"Ha, ha, you rascal," laughed Gypsy Tomas. "So you remember that?"

"I've thought a good deal about it, you see, and one of two things must happen. Either it comes off, and that'll be best, or we're caught and arrested. But even then we'd be better off than we are now. I'll tell you straight out, Father, I can't keep on this way and let Katrine suffer so. The worst of it is she's soon going to have a young one." He was serious.

After a time Carolus and Tomas and Katrine sat down beside the road and held council, and the whole matter was talked over. They had to come to some decision, and the only way out was the *spaneba*.*

They all felt relieved and happy; Katrine patted Carolus on the cheek with fond eyes and said, "You'll always be my *raklo*." ** It was as if they at last saw land.

"No more groveling!" Carolus talked the book language. "We'll go forward with a manly courage. The deed is to be done."

In the early afternoon they separated. Katrine and the children were going to follow the road to the hill country, and Tomas and Carolus would keep to the lowlands. They were going to *Haave*. Carolus knew his way about there.

The day was clear with only a mild frost; great,

* Stealing.

** Lad.

gray, still clouds lay across the heavens from west to south; the sun had almost set. It looked as if it were going to be a dark night. The snow for the most part had gone; so they could get along almost anywhere. "Now one can say, as Lapp-Barbro said, 'The help of the Devil is surer than God's help,'" laughed Carolus Magnus. They ran rather than walked. They had to get there quickly, and they had to keep warm. As long as there was any daylight, they kept to by-paths and the fields. They hardly spoke a word; there was no time for gossiping now; they had to save every ounce of strength. They rested twice. Between eleven and twelve at night they reached their goal.

There was no dog at Haave, and everything was quiet. Behind the wagon shed Carolus found a ladder, and they set it up against the spare chamber. Carolus took off his shoes, took out the one window, listened a moment, signed to his father that all was still, and slipped in.

The door between the chamber and inner room stood open. He stopped and listened to see if anyone were sleeping in the spare bed. No. Everything was quiet. In he went. His heart hammered a little, but except for that he was in fine fettle, almost happy, felt that he was owner of all that was there — at night the gypsy was master. Had he his Tjuro* on him? Yes. Stealthily and slowly he stole forward a half foot at a time, with one hand before him, in case anything should be in the way. Soon he stood before Anna's *escritoire*.

* Knife.

Was it locked? No. Everything open. Kindly folk in the house — they trusted in God rather than in locks. They ought to know what kind of guest they had now. He took down from the cupboard with cautious fingers the silver spoons, one after another — five large ones and three teaspoons. Then he lifted the lid of the desk and felt for the little drawer farthest in where Anna kept all her jewelry. Strangely enough it was locked, but that made no difference. He remembered the lock; he and Gunnar had played here a good many times in the old days. And he had learned from Olaves Didricksen the right trick for breaking a lock. He pressed with the point of his sheath knife a little. Knikk, knakk. It gave. "It's as Olaves says; I have a talent this way," he murmured to himself.

He took everything that he found: a silver scent-box; a great, old silver bracelet, a gold ring with a stone in it; a large spiral ring of gold; a heavy old-time silver chain. He knew them all and was almost soft-hearted — oh, the good years of his childhood. Then he wrapt what he had got in his handkerchief and stuck it in his coat pocket. On the wall by the door hung some clothing; he swept up an armful and carried it off. Then he got out, cast the clothes down to his father, put back the window, crept down, put on his shoes, set back the ladder, and they left.

Carolus felt so happy that he could hardly contain himself — danced, laughed, cut pigeon wings, pinched his father's rear-end. He had done his master stroke. The old man tried to hush him but without much success, and he set out on the run.

When they had got far enough from the house, they changed clothes. Carolus acted all the time like a crazy man, tripped up his father in the dark, laughed, skipped about, and aped the sheriff who was coming to take them. Then he fought with this sheriff that he had conjured up and beat him.

*"Oh, you shall have stripes of blue and green
From the gypsy's knife and his club, I ween."*

The old man protested and swore, but finally had to give over and start off; they turned toward the hills.

Soon they came to the fulling mill. Here they could go in and buy cloth for some new clothes. What one begins, one had better finish, says the proverb. Carolus lifted out the window frame and slipped in as silently as an eel. "Ha, ha, Moskro * slept, and the buro ** slept, and the dogs slept; the gypsy is master of the house." He threw out through the window roll after roll of cloth. After the fourth Tomas warned him that they had enough; they could not carry any more, he said; but Carolus kept on. He laughed like a river demon in the dark factory. "When you've started something, finish it." Finally he came out.

"Why, you're crazy, lad. What are we going to do with more than we can carry?"

"Throw it in the river," laughed Carolus, and he heaved in roll after roll. "Hurrah for buro, hurrah for Moskro."

* Sheriff.

** Peasant.

"You're crazy, and you'll see the inside of a jail yet," his father wailed. He picked up his bundles and went on, angry and disgruntled.

They started out over a foot-bridge across the mill race, Carolus after his father. He was in such high spirits, so beside himself, that he shoved his father out into the water, bundles and all. "Ha, ha, ha!"

The old man gasped and struggled, sputtered and swore, dragged himself and his cloth up out of the water and walked on, dripping. "Damn me, but I'll get even with you for that, you devil."

Carolus laughed till he was bent double. Finally he picked up his load and followed after his father, humming to himself with amusement. He hadn't treated his father very well, but . . . Ha, ha, ha, it was funny all the same . . .

*"Oh, my dear children
Don't you quarrel so.
Or else for years and years
You'll stay in the pago."*

The old man struggled on, shivering and shaking, and swore under his breath at the Devil's offspring that was going to destroy his health. Soon he noticed that his clothes were stiffening on his body; the weather was growing colder. The cloth on his shoulder turned to ice, and icicles hung from Anna's skirts that he had under his arm. He jangled and clattered at every step, and his stiff-frozen breeches cracked and creaked.

Then Carolus burst into another fit of laughter,

and Tomas laughed with him, angry though he was. "He, he, he," he cackled. 'Virtue is frail,' said the Devil,—he danced in glass breeches."

They had a hard trip across the gray hills and the naked mountain valleys in the falling snow and with little food, till in a day and a half they reached their rendezvous in Vaadal, half dead. There they divided their booty amongst themselves and parted. Olaves Didricksen took all the silver and gold and set off straight for town; he knew a man that bought such stuff. He was to get a third part of the money for his trouble and the trip. He told Carolus what he should do if he were seized—deny everything, as long as the stolen stuff was not found, and then get out of it somehow.

Tomas took the children and bore off to the east; Carolus and Katrine started off to the north. "And so we must hope for the best, my children." The first night Carolus and Katrine spent on a little mountain farm to the north of Vaadal. The next morning, as they were getting ready to start, the son of the house came rushing in. "Two sheriffs with twelve men are outside and want to talk with the gypsy; they've got guns."

Carolus and Katrine changed color and stared at one another. "The position is clear," said Carolus in the book language.

"They are all together," said Katrine in the gypsy tongue; "can't you give them the slip?"

"That'll be no trouble at all, tjeia* mine."

* Maid, lass.

"And if you're taken, be sure to deny everything."

"There's no use in the world of denying, when we have these clothes on."

"Damnation! Get off then."

Carolus turned to the woman of the house, who was standing by, as white as chalk and trembling with fear. "Go out now, please, and tell the sheriff that the person he wants is just inside the door. And then you must say that my wife here has had nothing to do with it; she knows nothing about it. Don't forget that, please."

The housewife left them.

Carolus tightened his knife-belt around him and followed her. When he came to the outer door, the sheriff told him to stand there, but Carolus kept on. The peasants came forward and tried to get hold of him, but at just the right moment he gave a leap aside and drew his sheath knife. "If anyone wants to, let him come on." They hesitated and stood fast. At that instant Carolus started at full speed toward the little cliff-face west of the farm. They followed him but without success; they were heavy-footed and he was nimble. Soon he had hidden himself in a little depression in the cliff right above the posse. They stood in the snow, very fierce with their guns and their old rusted sabres, and wondered what they could do. More and more peasants gathered, almost all of them with weapons. After a while the group was big enough to throw a line of guards around the cliff and lock in the gypsy. Carolus understood well enough what that meant and saw that he would soon

be caught. There would be no use trying to get up into the mountains.

He could hear something of what was said in the still, frosty, clear morning. "They've got the wife, anyway, haven't they?" said one.

"Yes," answered the other, "she howled and bit, but now she's sitting there crying." Poor Katrine!

It would be best for him to give himself up. If they took Katrine away, he wanted to be with her; they could get along together better than apart in a case like this. And he might get a milder sentence if he gave himself up. He crept out of his hiding place and went down to the sheriff. He put on his best manner and said that he did not want to be separated from his wife. "There's no need to use force; I'll go with you of my own free will." The sheriff was relieved. The gypsy and he went back to the farmhouse side by side. After them, like a guard of honor, came the posse with their guns and sabres.

That evening Katrine and Carolus spent in arrest at the sheriff's office each in a tiny room under guard. They could not even thump on the wall to one another.

Carolus was strangely sorrowful. He had much to think of now. He had never thought that he would be sitting here a convicted thief. And then his poor father! God knew where he was now; perhaps he had been taken too. God help us all; it was a hard thing for a son to think of, that his father should come on such evil times in his old age. But matters would have to take their course. The worst of all was Katrine. He would do what he could to

free her, and anyway, for her there'd be nothing much more than a little bread and water for receiving stolen goods. However it turned out, though, they would have to be separated.

He might draw perhaps one or two years, and where would he find Katrine when he came forth from the dwelling of sorrow? She was a fine woman; that wasn't the trouble. But it wouldn't be easy for her to get along by herself in such hard times, and he wasn't properly married to her, either. He knew well enough those who would be after her in one fashion or another, and we know how frail we all are, especially womenfolk.

He thought and thought, and his heart grew heavy and tender. Without Katrine he couldn't live; he knew that now more than ever before. She was a shrew when she was full, but except for that she was one of the best.

He had to tell her his sorrows and his thoughts, and since there was no other way to come in touch with her, he began to sing. He burst forth in such a strong voice that the guards started. He used the old gypsy chant song, a strange melody as sorrowful and lonely as the wind when it whines in the chimney.

*"Oh, hear me, tjeia mine,
How I sing to you.
Oh, hear me, tjeia mine,
How I sing to you.
I am so full of fear.
Listen while I sing."*

After a time an answer came from the other room, Katrine singing:

*"Oh, don't be sorrowful,
My raklo, for me.
Oh, don't be sorrowful,
My raklo, for me.
I am not afraid.
Listen while I sing."*

Then he told her of his sorrow:

*"Oh, hear me, tjeia mine,
How I sing to you.
Oh, hear me, tjeia mine,
How I sing to you.
You'll have a mors * again,
But I'll stay here, I know."*

From the next room came back the tender answer:

*"Oh, you must not believe
That I would ever fail you.
Oh, you must not believe
That I would ever fail you.
For I am not afraid.
Hear me while I sing to you."*

They sang on for a space, of love and faithfulness and patience through the good and bad days. But finally the sheriff came and said that they must keep quiet.

* Man.



XXVII

ACCURSED! Accursed!
Stroke after stroke; limb after limb; bone after bone — he was to live and see his own destruction bit by bit and step by step, and when he had suffered all that he could suffer, God would set His heel upon his neck and crush him to bits like a worm, and then he would go to hell — in torment to eternity.

Fearful, fearful was the wisdom of God; righteous and unswerving was the Lord of Sabaoth. He smote where the blow told — smote where it told. First his most prized idol — Gunnar; then the Luck tree, which had rotted from root to top; then his heirlooms, his treasure and his secret hoard. Hah! and he had locked the desk drawer. "Now I shall show you what I think of your locks and your idols." The Lord laughed at him; he that was on high mocked him. . . . He snapped his fingers. Enok saw everything now, saw hell before him clearly. He had loved the world, loved the world and striven after it, always, always. God had said: "You shall sell all that you have and give to the poor"; but Enok had said No. Likewise with everything that God had said, Enok had had his own way, had hardened himself like Pharaoh. He had soothed himself with parson's talk, had felt the Spirit bear witness

within him but had made himself thick-eared and deaf, and sinned of his own will, had sinned of his own will. "The sin unto death" it was called in God's Word. Hah! He had tried to buy himself free with little sacrifices, with "Jesus children" and talk and nonsense, with a measure of meal here and there for which he had received payment in labor. Ah! Enok grinned with the pain so that he looked like one insane.

Now came the Lord and laughed at him. "What you denied Me of your own free will, I now take by force. I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink. Go forth, accursed one, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels."

Enok went through a terrible period. Doom had been pronounced; the Scriptures had no comfort for him any longer — only judgment. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift. . . ." Impossible, impossible. "They shall be cast into the sea of fire that burns with fire and brimstone, and they shall chew their tongues in their torment, and the smoke of their torment shall rise to heaven through all eternity — through all eternity — through all e-terni-ty."

His bones melted within him; his fingers withered and his knees grew weak; fits of dizziness passed through his head. Too late, too late, now it was too late! He had hardened himself so long that God had grown hard against him. He made trial of

himself, found that he no longer wanted to do God's will, did not want to. If an angel came down from Heaven and said, "Sell all your goods and give to the poor," he would not, could not bring himself to be willing. "And God hardened Pharaoh's heart." He snapped his fingers.

Think! God's burning, searing mockery — that it had to be his own "Jesus child" and Tomas. Ah! when God made mock of a person, the mockery bit. And no grace for him, no remission! The rest got back all that was stolen, but Enok's heirlooms were gone and remained gone.

From Carolus came a long letter, full of regret and godly phrases. Enok could not read it all; it was unendurable. He skipped over to the end and there read, "But I can never fully thank . . ." and so forth. "Father and I, on account of our great remorse and our honorable standing, have been sent to the penitentiary instead of being sentenced to hard labor, and I most solemnly promise before God and you, that when I come out, I shall begin a new life. . . ."

"Rubbish," said Enok; "stuff and nonsense."

Without peace he wandered from place to place, without the patience to work, without the calm to rest, back and forth, back and forth. Just after they had heard him in the cellar, they would hear him in the loft, and just after he had gone through a doorway, he would disappear. He forgot what he went after, and what he wanted to do; nothing was worth while or of any use. He roamed about in such disquietude that the sweat drops stood ringed around his eyes, often stood gazing into

space, lost in thought; or stock still in the middle of the road as if he had been bewitched; or halfway up a flight of stairs. He snapped his fingers, mumbled words without meaning or terrible things, and then rushed off as if he were scared to death — on, on without aim or purpose, without rest or peace. He was a shadow over the whole house.

Sometimes he could not bring himself to sit at table any more. He would throw himself down, and let one of the children say grace, force down several mouthfuls and then leave; it was a wonder how he lived on such days. "I dare not eat," he wailed shrilly; "the food is accursed."

He got out his old leather garments again and dressed himself in them. Such a brand for the burning and such a sinful body as his own did not deserve anything better.

"You ought to dress like other people," Anna scolded him.

He answered in a thick, wild voice that she did not recognize, "I'll be no more beautiful when I have to depend on the poor dole."

His worst fancies about food came back but wilder than before and with no reason in them. "Are you crazy? Butter on the table! Be glad so long as we have dry bread in the house."

He read prayers morning and evening, but in a way that was really gruesome. He skipped over everything that was hopeful or comforting. He seemed to think that such things were not for him. Whatever was terrible — of sin and doom and death and punishment — he read forth in such a loud,

wild voice and with such clear reference to himself, that he frightened the whole household.

He was having such a hard time — such a hard time. His old fear had come again in his bosom, only worse than before — it was colder, deeper, farther in; it lay upon his heart like the chill of death. That it was which never left him in peace, it and his thoughts, all his wild, fearful thoughts that gnawed at his brain so constantly — grisly thoughts full of the mockery of God, so that he tried to escape from himself. The lightning must strike now; the earth must gape for him. . . .

If only he could have slept . . . but he dared not. His anguish was so omnipresent, so alert, it watched beside him and hung above him, a vague, pressing fear with great, frightened eyes. As soon as he had properly fallen to sleep he started up, then laid himself again in the heavy bed, shaking, and wet with sweat.

He seldom fell asleep before the early dawn, and then dreams took hold of him. He hung, dizzied, to the top of the church tower; lay and clung to high, steep house roofs with no footholds on them; felt that he was doing to slip, going to slip . . . but did not; or he sat driving down over great hills that grew steeper and steeper, steeper and steeper, till finally they were naked mountain cliffs leading down where he had to go. . . . Or else he was doing some evil deed — he had committed a murder, and was fleeing the sheriff; sometimes he had been judged and was to be punished; the whole dream dealt with his punishment, but some obstacle always arose. He stood under the gallows, or stood gazing at the axe

and the block, but it dragged on and dragged on, one long and deadly fear. Once he dreamed that he was down in a great cellar, and this cellar was hell. He stood there and slaughtered sheep, struck and stuck, sheep after sheep, but a vague fear had hold of him, as if he were doing something gruesome. When he looked around, he saw that it was not sheep that he had been slaughtering but his own children. Body by body they lay along the floor; farthest away lay Anna with the littlest at her breast; Gunnar raised one stiff arm that had been flayed. He cried out so in his sleep that Anna had to awaken him.

The parson visited him once but made no headway. "Because 'it is impossible, impossible...'" Anna tried the resource that had helped so well before — she sent after Lars Danielson — but this time he was of little use. Lars sat and worked with Enok one whole afternoon and evening, but made no impression. He got down on his knees and prayed for him, but "'There is a sin unto death'" said Enok, "'and for that ye shall not pray.'"

"That is the deception of the Devil, Enok, by which he would trap you."

"'Because it is impossible.... If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.' There is no sacrifice for sin, Lars," Enok screamed.

Lars did not yield; he came forward with all the strong words of forgiveness and mercy that could be found in the Bible or the prayer book. Anna sat in the next room with the door ajar, and they sounded so beautiful that she wept, but Enok set his

face against them. "Sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal"... that is what they are for me now," he said. "They go in at one ear and out at the other; they are not for me."

"That's the Devil, Enok," urged Lars, fearful now himself. "You would not listen to the Devil rather than to your Saviour?"

"They are not for me; they are not for me."

"But you have a yearning? You want to be happy with your Saviour?"

"I want to be happy."

"With your Saviour, yes. See there. You mustn't give up, Enok; you mustn't give up. Faith lies in that desire, and God will not quench the smoking flax; that you know."

He took up Johan Arndt and read aloud to Enok the section dealing with "The High Spiritual Temptations."

"First a man must know that the sorrows of the soul come from God; in 1 Samuel, 2, 6, we read: 'The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.' This Hell wherein God leads a man is, namely, the sorrow of the spirit and the despair of the soul. In such dire need can a man be so deep cast down in unbelief that he is hardly aware of his faith. All the power of faith is drawn together into a single point, and into an unseen sigh, wherein, however, Faith itself unknowing is hidden and protected. And though a man in such anguish, torment, and pain, and fear is often impatient, yes, even thinks or speaks that which is in mockery of God and unworthy of Him,

God does not reckon it against him, for that happens against his will and is the highest trial whereby God cleanses and purifies us.' "

"Yes, these words have been a help to me for many a time in these last years," broke in Enok, "but now they are merely sound. Clamor and clangor and a sounding cymbal."

Lars begged and prayed him not to give up, begged and prayed till he had tears in his eyes, and he cried to God for this sorely tried brother, so that Anna outside wept aloud. Finally he rose and said the benediction over Enok. "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace.' "

Blank-faced and carelessly, as if he only wanted to have it over with, Enok promised "to wait upon the Lord" for yet a while, and with that Lars left him.

Once again came spring — a sour, blowy, backward spring, that would never be summer. The northwest wind whined overhead night and day; there was a frost on Whitsuntide night, and it snowed on midsummer night. Would not the light win over the darkness this time?

Enok fumbled and puttered about the place like a man in a dream. He was strangely forgetful and listless so that there were days when Anna had to tell him what he should do just as if he were a child. He constantly complained and said that he wanted to die. It made no difference what swept him off, if he could only be taken away. "Then Gunnar would

come home and you would all be happy again." Anna was both vexed and weary.

"Have you never thought of talking to a doctor?" Anna asked one day when he paced back and forth racked with anguish and beside himself.

He stopped with his back to her and snapped his fingers. "The doctor?" he burst out. "What sort of devil's talk is that?"

"Well, I for my part think that you are sick. If you could only get some way to sleep better. . . ."

"Sleep? I don't dare to sleep. I think that I can still face the Devil after a fashion when I'm awake."

"But you must see that you will get worse if you don't sleep."

He turned toward her. His face was covered with a stubbly beard, stiff and distorted. His eyes stared hard and white from their sockets. No one would have believed that this was Enok Haave.

"Damnation," he broke out; he seemed to have been struck with an idea. "Do you know of a doctor that doesn't believe in God?"

She turned pale. Now it was coming; now it was coming. "What's that you say?"

He grew silent and listless. "If there were only one man on earth . . . who could make me believe that there wasn't any God."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Enok."

"I wish I were a gypsy. The gypsies are well off; they don't believe in anything. If only somebody could take God from me. . . ."

He turned sharp about and rushed off, stopped

in the doorway. "Do you think that it would help if I took to drink?"

She left him; she had never seen him so wrought up before.

He stumbled off again.



XXVIII

A SPARKLING bright Sunday morning! A sunbeam shone upon the wall by the top of the bookcase. The blithe, gay sunfleck flickered to and fro. Outside a light, gusty summer wind was blowing which stirred the new foliage of the trees and the branches of the doomed willow that still lived.

Larks and starlings and other small birds chattered, chirped, their little breasts ready to burst with their jubilation at the dawn. Kvitt, kvitt, titt, titt, titt, ti-it, ti-it; tirli, tirli; tirli, tirli.

Inside they sat at the breakfast table. Enok bolted a mouthful of food now and again, then forgot himself — sat staring into space with reddened, sleepless eyes. He had no desire for food, did not like food. Why should he feed that body of his? If a man was steadfast enough . . . he could starve himself to death. One should not scorn the gifts of God — to the devil with God's gifts. That felt good — such a hot devilish thought. I say, to the devil with God's gifts. Ah, that felt very good!

Another thought took life in his brain — one even more devilish, even hotter. He wanted to think it, burned with longing to think it, to say it out loud, very loudly right to His face, to scream it — but he did not dare. The lightning might strike down. He

only saw the thought far off; it was a strange thought that went masterless; a goat, a billy goat of a thought, a thought of a billy goat, a satan of a thought that went dancing and springing and leaping and kicking against Heaven in its wild antics.

Enok got up from the table so suddenly that they all started, went over to the mirror and stared at his reflection, squinted and grinned. Yes, that was the Fiend; that is the Fiend; he and no one else stares forth from these eyes, and mouths and mows through these face twistings. He snapped his fingers and rushed out. They heard him go into the spare room. They wondered if he would go over to the escritoire and stand there muttering and mumbling over the empty jewelry box.

But Enok went up to the mirror, grinned at himself. "That was what she saw. That was what she saw! That old hag had not expected to see the Fiend in Enok Haave's eyes."

Lost, lost he was. Possessed of a devil like the lunatics in the Gospels. "If Jesus came, I would rage and curse and bid Him go His way. Jesus? . . . Just the same! If what they said of hell was true, He could have saved me from it when I prayed Him to. They promise much, but give. . . . See there; see there; isn't that the Devil? Isn't that the Devil?"

He paced to and fro, paused in the middle of the floor — humming and snapping his fingers, humming and snapping —

Kvitt, kvitt, kvi-tt! Titt, titt, ti-itt. Tirli, tirli, tih! "Least of all for the birds; they have no souls, they. . . ."

"But I am not afraid of you." He snapped his

fingers. "I am not afraid of you. You are honest. You will take me." Snap, snap. "The smoke of their torment . . . rises up to all eternity. They shall chew their tongues with pain . . . through all eternity — through all-eternity — thru-all-e-t-e-r-n-i-t-y-. When You knew that I was going there, why did You create me?" He bathed in thoughts of hell; sank, as in a dream, in fires of brimstone and flame; dug down deeper and deeper; dreamed himself among the flames while still alive; they licked and curled up about his naked breast — about his arms and about his neck. He shuddered; a despairing thought arose in him — it must feel good. Good! Hah! Like burning weals along his back. Hah! It must sear well; it would sear into him well.

Half unconscious of what he did, he repeated to himself the Hell Verses of the "Spiritual Chain."

*"Who will write down for me the dire torments of
Hell,
Where howl the fiends like dogs, fiercely grim and
fell,
There from the mouths of the accurséd folk
Spurt out red flame and glowing brimstone's smoke;
There throats are but the flues wherein the flames
do burn;
There flesh is but the food wherein Hell's worms
do turn.
On every dooméd limb the veins gape open wide;
They are tormented sore; beset on every side.
They chew their tongues; they gnash their black-
ened teeth; they stand*

Weighed down with chains that bind them hand to hand.

Up from their flesh arises eternal smoke and steam...."

"Uh, the smell of burning flesh, burning flesh. . . . But then you could know that there was nothing worse. . . . Do it today? In the evening when it grew dark. . . . When it grew dark, and then you would know that things couldn't be any worse." Snap, snap. . . .

Anna thrust her head through the door, cleared her throat so that he would not be startled. "Hm. Won't you hold prayers, Enok?"

He broke out wildly, "Hell will be hot enough for me without my reading any more prayers."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Enok? You're not so crazy but that you know what you are doing and saying. See if you can't behave yourself when there are strangers here. I won't listen to any more of this; remember that. It sounds so dreadful, it makes me ill. And you ought to think of the children—how they must feel to hear you talk this way. Aren't you going to church either?"

Quietly and tonelessly he answered her. "When the dog goes to church, he is turned out."

"I don't think that you should give up this way, Enok. You are sensible enough; you know better than to do what you are doing now. Come now and hold prayers, and get a grip on yourself. You can see that you won't be helped by simply giving up."

"You're right, Anna; you're right." He began to weep. After a bit he followed her into the living

room and brought out the hymn book. He sat down at the reading table and paged through the book for a long time. He did not like the hymn for the day, turned the pages back and forth. The others sat still and waited. Tick, tick, tick, tick, said the living room clock, slowly and patiently.

Kvitt-kvitt-kvi-itt! Titt-titt-ti-iti; ti-itt! Yes, they can sing; they are not going to live forever. . . . Finally he said that they would sing Number 230. Heavily and harshly he began:

*"Constantly I yearn
For a happy end."*

He skipped the word "happy." Wildly and more wildly he kept on:

*"I am prepared to leave
This world so falsely fair
For Zion's holy groves.
O Jesus, grant my prayer."*

The "Zion's holy groves" and "Jesus" he skipped over. It was terrible to listen to. After that he left them to sing alone for the most part.

Brighter and brighter shone the sun; gayly and more gayly danced the sunbeam — quivered upon the wall and floor; glanced upon Anna's skirt; played on the sweat-damp hair of Enok; leaped upward to the ceiling, where myriads of flies were crawling and buzzing. The shadow of the old mountain ash that was swaying in the summer wind slipped back and forth from the clock to the old brown bed

hangings. Sun and summer everywhere and yet they sat there as if they were at a funeral.

The hymn droned on to the stanza:

*"Thou poor and sorrowful widow,
Do not thus despair —"*

when Anna began to cry. Enok finished his prayer hastily and went out. They did not see him again until evening.

More and more frequently he omitted prayers. It was terrible, thought Anna; it was as if he gave up his last hope. But worst of all was that he began to talk of making an end of himself.

Anna went about with an ache in her bosom every day, and sometimes she was so sick that she wanted to go to bed, but she did not dare; she had to keep up. If it had not been for Torkjell Tualand, she could never have gone on. He took everything in the same off-hand way and helped to make her burden easier to bear.

"Heh, nobody who keeps talking about it, kills himself; you don't have to be afraid. You'll see that soon he'll sweat out this terrible godliness of his and be all right again."

Torkjell practically managed the farm, for, when Enok had his worst spells, he paid no attention to anything, and Torkjell had a power over him that helped him. "Oh, put an end to such talk," Torkjell would say calmly; "we've got to get in the hay."

Enok grew quieter. "If only I could be like you."

"Well, why can't you?" asked Torkjell. "You've got the same God that I have."

"He won't listen to me any longer, Torkjell."

"Why don't you yell louder?"

"I've cried and called to Him; I have gone down on my knees and prayed to Him like a child, but it was no use."

"I'd have been satisfied if you had stood on your head. You give up too easy, Enok; you've got to have patience with these great gentlemen."

"If I only had your sort of mind."

"You take the world too seriously, Enok."

"But it is in our sorrow and need that . . . God should help us."

"Help yourself, Enok. Put these thoughts aside and get to work and try to be as you were before. Then you'd sleep and things would come out all right. If you've got your health, then . . . Health will give you back your courage, and it's courage that carries a man across the creek."

The summer was warm, stiflingly warm. His bad spells often came over Enok and he was never himself.

He had so many queer pains that were not really pains, pains that he could not place and that no one could understand — a disease of the soul that took hold on the body: fevers that turned to chills; chills that burned; darting pains in his head and prickling in his skin; cramps and nausea, and cold ticklings in his stomach; a feeling of heaviness and weakness; violent and frightening fits of dizziness; sudden and unexpected loss of strength in his knees — but they all came from the same cause — the fear,

the cold, bleak fear, that lay within his breast and sucked all down into it like a great darkness, a gulf or an abyss, deep and empty and meaningless, without bottom or bound.

As soon as it lightened, life grew brighter; he thought that he would no longer be troubled by it, thought for a time that he could turn to God, but if the slightest thing out of the ordinary happened — if a calf fell sick; if Rakel broke a cup, if little Paul wore a hole through his shoe; even at times when there was no reason at all — the fear came rolling in over him like a night fog from the sea. Straightway he lost control of himself, was driven about by every wandering thought, without will or consciousness of his own. He was like a cork that is sucked down into a whirlpool.

He had spells when he could hardly breathe, was like a person shut in, had the sensation of being laid living in his coffin, being stared at by vague foggy eyes that glared down upon him. His breast tightened, and his breath came painfully and heavily. At times everything about him grew strange; he trod forward into a wide, empty space alone save for some evil thing that he didn't see, but outside the troll ring stood all mankind with fear-wide eyes, and he was afraid lest all around him should burst out into shrieks, wild screams, howling weeping, a heaven-soaring cry of anguish.

Water, water — to drown all this fire and torment in deep, deep water . . . God help me!

If only he had someone to talk to — someone to pour out his troubles to. Oh, if he could only

win back his children! It didn't matter about God, if only he could have his children again. If Gunnar would only come back and be fond of his father as he was when he was little. Such thoughts almost made Enok weep.

Something unpleasant happened. They had to change maids in the middle of the year; Maren, the wench, was with child. That rake, Helmik Heialand, was blamed; he seemed to have let himself go entirely.

"Accursed, accursed," cried Enok; "for my sake has God cast dishonor over all my house. Why in the devil's name do I go on here? Why don't I make an end of myself so that God's wrath may be turned aside?"

Something went round and round in his head, worried and worked away there till his forehead burned and ached. There seemed to be a prickling in his brain, as from delicate tormenting claws — a feeling as if his whole brain had swelled and was too large and scraped against its bony case. He began to have strange fancies; he wanted to stand on his head, turn somersaults. His thoughts went round in a circle, hotter and hotter, more and more fearful; he jumped up and chased them off, but couldn't do without them either — his head seemed too empty then and uncomfortable. Everything slipped away from him and himself with it. Finally he gave up and let the thoughts tumble about as they would.

At times they went away of themselves, drawn of a strange power out into the swirling night, into the everlasting darkness. He was left behind for-

gotten and lost, with shaking hands and working features, muttering words that he didn't understand, curses, prayers, meaningless nonsense; it sounded as if someone else were speaking through him.

There was one evening when the Devil drove him forth. He was so bemused that he didn't know where he was going, was beside himself, had no consciousness of his whereabouts, but no matter where he went or didn't go, he came time after time to the Heialand lake, right under the little knoll where the water was so deep. For the third time he stood there in the darkening evening.

Did God will it? Would He allow it? Had he given the Devil free play? Enok cast himself down and groveled in the heather, took hold with both hands, held fast; convulsive twitchings ran up through his body, but the Devil tugged and tugged, nearer and nearer, nearer and nearer... and the water below him lured him, rippled, and gurgled low and invitingly.

"God in Heaven, You don't will this, You don't will this!" He didn't know how long he lay and struggled for his life; finally he had crawled a little way up the hill, but the Devil still tugged and the water lured.

Then it was that a hard, strong voice in the hills to the south of the lake rose in song. It was Tönes Tualand, the schoolmaster:

*"There wandered in the twilight
A lonely will-o'-wisp,
Then came a wind and swept him off
And quenched his pallid fire."*

The sorrow-heavy tones carried wide over the hills in the stillness of the night. They died without answer, but to Enok they came like a breath of cold air.

*"He vanished in the drifting mist
Beneath the rain cloud gray.
It was his dream both day and night
To find oblivion.*

*Of marsh and fenland was he born
To roam alone at night.
A homeless spirit, tired of life,
He wandered far and near."*

The song drifted toward the south farther and farther away. Enok could barely catch the last words.

*"As light has only the one dream
To be consumed and die,
He gladly hailed the shrouding mist
That gave him peace and death."*

A lapwing fluttered around in the air and then settled down. The deadened roar of the river from the dam above him filled his ears. Along the shore the white mist rose warm and soft and spread over juniper bush and stone.

Enok lay in the heather and wept. "You have saved me, Great God, You have saved me, and heard my prayer. Great and dear Lord God, You have heard my prayer and saved me."



XXIX

HE went home, slept peacefully that night, and awoke the next morning with a clear head. He hardly dared believe it true — went about the whole day in fear and wonder: it would come again; it would come again soon. . . . But he was left in peace the whole day. That evening he offered up a heart-felt prayer.

“Dear Saviour,” he said softly, “You have been good to me today and let me once again see Your gentle face, and feel Your strong, saving hand, and let me believe that it was in Your mercy and not in Your wrath that you have punished me so hard of late . . . so that I might see how powerless I am when You do not help me. O Lord, I thank You; I thank You. And if it were Your will . . . to free me from this great fear that I have so sorrowfully well earned by my sins and pride, if You could let me rest, Lord, though if it were only for a little while, rest from these great agonies! Yes, Lord, if You in your mercy could take this cup from me; if You could let me believe in Your mercy; if You would support and help me in the bitter struggle, so that I shall not be forced under. . . . Oh, You have said that You would not let us be tried beyond our strength, and that You would not encompass the death of a sinner — You would have him turn

to you and live. Oh, dear and gracious Saviour, I pray to You from all my tormented heart, to help me for the sake of Your own precious blood. You who Yourself suffered the great agony in the garden of Gethsemane, so that You sweated blood; You who in the anguish of death on the Holy Tree had to feel that God had forsaken You, You know my agony, and You know how weak and helpless I am; oh, You will be with me and hold my hand through the valley of the shadow of death.

"But," he continued, with a long, trembling sigh, "if it is Your will that I once again be cast into this confusion of mind. . . . You see, Lord, You know what is best for me. You understand me and know what I need. . . . and what I can endure. I yield myself unto Your hand and I entrust my life to You, but Lord, be merciful. . . ." His voice broke with tears, as he kept on: "Be merciful! Go not clean away from me; let me never be entirely alone. Keep an eye on me, Lord; always keep an eye on me! Spare me, if You can, the terrible mockeries and the devilish thoughts. And leave me so, Lord, that my death can be good, to Your honor and for the salvation of my wretched soul. One thing more, oh, Lord, will I crave of you." His voice shook as if he were afraid. "You know what the Devil whispers to me in my black hours — You know, Lord," he screamed out. "You mustn't give him the right to do that; You must stop that. Do with me what You will, but keep me from that evil; 'Our Father which art in Heaven; Hallowed be Thy name. . . !' "

Afterwards he sang softly:

"'Who knows how near me is my end.'"

The last verse he sang over again with tear-filled eyes raised toward heaven:

*"'O God, for dear Lord Jesus' sake,
May I a peaceful parting make.'"*

Anna wept so the tears ran down her face.

But soon matters grew worse. In market time Anna and Enok both went to town; they were going to try to get Gunnar home. And Gunnar promised he would come; he said he would give notice in the spring. Enok was as happy as a child; after that he had a fairly good period.

At Christmas when Gunnar was home, they had a regular celebration. Some of the family relatives were there and Enok had bought up supplies of all kinds of good things for Christmas — even wine and coffee. He forced himself to become almost cheerful in company. Gunnar, who had learned from his mother how matters stood, was kindly and gentle to his father.

But when Enok realized that the lad dreaded to be alone with him, he gave up entirely. As soon as the guests had left, he showed that he was in one of his worst spells. Sleeplessness came upon him and he grew more and more unbalanced. He finally got so that he could not control himself even in the presence of strangers.

Several people came and tried to comfort him. The parson came; Lars Danielson came; other evan-

gelists came, but their presence seemed to make him worse.

One day old Salomon Storbrekke came over. He leaned heavily on his cane now; age had begun to tell on him. He was bent and doddering; his voice was weak and squeaky; he had almost lost his hearing — an old man in his dotage. He sat and talked of Enok's mother; she had had the same sort of fits of brooding, he said, so "You mustn't be worried, Enok, you mustn't be worried." But no one could understand what comfort Enok should get from the information that his mother had had the same sort of fits. "I wish I had your faith," Enok yelled in his ear.

"Yes, yes, that's right," he nodded — obviously not hearing what was said.

Finally Kjistina Ramstad came — she whom they said Enok had been fond of once on a time. He talked with her for a long while, but she couldn't say very much, she was all the time struggling with tears. She only bade Enok not to give up. "You know that there are many who would be sorry . . . if a man like you should muddle away his life." She could no longer restrain her weeping. "It's so terrible to see . . . you like this, Enok . . . You don't understand." Enok was quieter after that talk, but his sleeplessness kept up and Anna thought more and more of the doctor.

Kornelius, the son of Helge whose farm lay to the east of them, was sick; they thought it was consumption. He had always been delicate, thin and bony with a curiously unsteady walk, but now his sickness took a real grip on him. He had kept

indoors the whole winter, but now was bedridden. When spring came, they all could see how it was going to end. Helge went to town after the doctor, and Anna urged Enok to make use of the opportunity. He fought against her, but had no strength to resist any longer. "Do as you will," he said finally. "Nothing will help me."

A thickset, heavy-footed man, with a great, black beard, and with red, congested face and eyes, came stamping into the room one day clad in traveling boots and fur coat and with his hat still on his head. He went straight over to the bed. "Well, what's the matter with you, old chap?" he asked.

Enok had combed his hair, and washed, and changed his shirt and gone to bed. It was only seemly to be in bed when one had a doctor in the house.

"Well, to tell the truth," he answered, "I don't know. There are several things the matter... or perhaps only one."

"Now then, out with it, my man. I haven't much time. My God, how slow everything goes for a peasant."

"It's sin, mainly, that troubles me. I've such a fear, such a sense of despair...."

"What the hell, is it the same thing that we've got over yonder?" He stared into Enok's eyes and felt his pulse. "Hm — people talk of the country stock, of the fresh country stock. Hm! Indeed! Now then. Hmm! Nothing in particular. What's that? 'Sin'? What has that to do with me? You must talk to the parson about that, what? Go to the parson and be comforted, then...."

Enok felt uncomfortable. The doctor had whiskey on his breath and swore every other word.

"The worst is that I can't sleep," he said. "I've such an uneasy conscience, such fear, such. . . ." Suddenly he screamed out, "I'm in hell."

"Hush, man! Might there be something the matter with *mens*? Hm! Nothing in particular, I suppose. Hm! It's only this piety again. You probably go to these revival meetings and lap up all this talk of fire and brimstone, I suppose. Heh, heh — *pecus*. As I said before, my man, if there is anything the matter with your conscience, you'd better go to the parson; I've nothing to do with that, but you can have a sleeping potion. Listen here, young one, is there pen and ink in the house?"

One of the little girls ran out to find them.

The doctor stood with his back to Enok, busied about something; he brought out a piece of paper, pulled up from his pocket a medicine flask, drank, cleared his throat, corked the flask and put it back, began to pace to and fro and talk to himself. "Hm, people must get crazy; such small, low rooms, dark and stuffy, and then hell. But you won't do without hell, what?" he turned to Enok. "That's your one comfort, eh? The wretched and the oppressed must have a place where they can send their oppressors; that's their method of taking revenge. The gospel of the poor, heh, heh! . . . But you see that it can turn against yourselves, what? You would certainly stone me if I told you that there is no more hell than there is back of my hand here. . . . Where the devil has that young one gone? Now then, hurry up, lass, we haven't so much time in the city as you

have here in the country, you see. . . . You might have washed yourself a little. Thanks."

He sat down and wrote. "Make it strong," called Enok.

"Hah? Strong? I'm not so damned sure about the fellow. Better be careful, old man; you may go wrong in the head — your wits, do you understand? Yes?"

Anna came in from the kitchen. Could she ask the doctor to have a bite to eat, perhaps?

"Thanks, mother. I've got food with me. Here you are. One tablespoonful in the evening. Two specie-dollars, please."

"You're in a hurry to get us on the parish," said Enok to his wife after the doctor had left.

"I'd never thought it would be so much," wailed Anna, quite taken aback. "But you know they can do what they want to, such people."

Enok wouldn't take the drops. He didn't dare, he said. What if he couldn't wake up when the dreams came? Finally, when he did take the drops, they had no effect. He grew worse rapidly, didn't suffer so much as he had before, but seemed strangely weak. He talked so much nonsense, that it was hardly worth while to listen to him. He could not live any longer; he couldn't go on living. Gunnar would come home, and he would leave. . . . Anna had heard that so many times that she no longer answered, paid no attention to it; it was only talk. She herself went about with an ache in her breast, knew that she was getting worse and worse. The nights troubled her the most; she lay and trembled with fear more than

she slept. Suppose he went really crazy; what might he not do then?

One day she came on him in the hay-loft, turning somersaults like a boy. "Oh, no, Enok," she wailed. She began to cry with fear and anxiety.

"Are you crying too, now?" he burst out. "Now you'll be rid of me soon. . . . Only say so, and I'll do it." He whimpered. "I haven't the strength to do it myself. If only I had the strength. . . ."

She didn't dare be alone in the house. On her own responsibility, she hired Torkjell Tualand to be there steadily. He went home only Saturday nights and Sundays.

She dragged herself around, as lean as a shadow, expected each day that she would have to take to her bed. One day she saw Enok go to the barn with a rope, and shook so that she had to climb into bed. She sent Serina and the little girls out to the barn, and little Paul scrambled up into the bed with his mother, afraid because all the rest were afraid. . . . Anna realized that she couldn't stand it much longer and she sent word to Gunnar that he would have to break loose and come home.

He came the next Sunday. Enok was happy at once. "Well, here's the little man," he said fondly, as if he were talking to a child.

Gunnar was aghast when he saw his father. Uncombed and unwashed, with his damp hair clinging to his head, with distorted face, blue and pale — almost corpse-white, with blood-shot eyes, stiff and wide — he looked so different that his son could hardly recognize him.

Enok stared at Gunnar and frowned, didn't like

the way the boy looked — town-clad and fine; erect and superior in city fashion, thin and pale, with whiskers under his nose. This was nothing to put in charge of a farm.

"Have you come for good now?" he broke out, standing in the middle of the floor right in front of his son.

Gunnar blushed. "I can't get loose for a time yet," he answered.

Anna sighed from the curtained bed where she lay weary and discouraged. Enok snapped his fingers. "It is His will; it is His will." Then he turned and went out of the door.

"You must follow him and talk to him nicely," said Anna. "You see how things are."

Gunnar went out and found his father in the wagon shed, where he stood snapping his fingers and grinning mirthlessly at all the fine machines that he had bought. They lay there and made fun of him. "What do you want with us, you fool? You can't use us."

"Hm." Gunnar cleared his throat.

Enok turned around, went straight over to him. "You mustn't go around with whiskers under your nose, Gunnar; it's a way of the Devil, way of the Devil. It's bad enough that your father is going to hell."

"Why, Father, what sort of talk is that?"

With his face thrust close to his son's, Enok continued in a harsh, frantic voice: "And you mustn't dance. Do you know, when I was young, I wanted to learn to dance, but I couldn't. Then I prayed to God, but it was no use. Then I prayed to the Fiend.

'You, Satan, can't you teach me to dance?' Then I learned a little, but now the Devil is taking his wage. You mustn't dance, Gunnar; promise me that."

Gunnar was white. He said "Yes," but hardly knew what he said. He had worse things than that on his conscience. . . .

"Don't you see that God has forsaken me, Gunnar? Don't you see? Don't you see? Everybody can see that. When you come home, though, I'll get along. You can take over the farm at once, and if you want to get married, get married. Everybody should get married or else the unclean Spirit gets him in his power. Have you been steadfast against the unclean Spirit, Gunnar?"

"Y-e-s. . . ." Gunnar grew red.

"You think that I look queer, don't you?" With his face close to his son's, he whispered hoarsely. "It's the Fiend; it's the Fiend,—this terror in my breast, you know. Terror that you've never known. Ice; night; ice and night, deep in the soul."

"Father, you mustn't. . . ."

"Hush. Now I'll tell you something. The Devil is after me; he wants me to make an end of myself. Every day; every evening. . . ."

"You . . . mustn't do that, Father. That . . . oh, you won't do it. That takes will power, and you haven't any."

Enok wept. "That's what I comfort myself with. I can't; I can't. I haven't the strength."

Here was a state of things! And his father had held so faithfully to God, too. Was that all one got for turning to God? "And I who . . ." Gunnar felt lost. "And now if things go wrong with me, too. . . ."

There's One above who will help you," he said, reddening.

"If only you could make me believe that there was no God," whispered Enok. "The sheriff doesn't believe in God, and he thrives; the doctor doesn't believe in God, and he's fat as a cow. The gypsies don't believe in God either — oh, I wish I were as well off as the gypsies."

"Hadn't we better go in now, Father? It's cold out here. . . ."

"You must promise that you will come home," Enok begged. "You must come home and take care of your father. I don't dare go about alone here; every time that I see a rope or a noose . . ."

"Come now, Father." Gunnar took his father by the arm and half dragged him back to the house.

"He's strong, anyway," muttered Enok. He followed his son as obediently as a child. He continued in a whimper, "If only I had your strong arm to support me!"



XXX

GUNNAR went back to town, conscience-smitten. He felt worse now; he had never imagined that conditions were so bad at home. But what could he do? What in the dev — what should he do? He couldn't improve matters by going home now.

That wh — that ugly slut that he had gone around with lately. . . . Fool that he was — he should have kept on with the others. . . . but now he was stuck. He had tried force and persuasion; he had even offered her money, for no one could know certainly who was father to that child; she had three anyway. . . .

If she thought, however, that she had a chance to become a farmer's wife, or if she really was fond of him in her way — then there was no way of getting around her. She would take her oath, she said, that she had had nothing to do with anybody else during that time; and the looks of the child didn't belie his father. . . . The dev — what a mess to get into!

There was only one way out — America. Things had gone to the bad at home — conditions were terrible there since his father had been like this. . . . He could probably get his mother to take the matter calmly, but father. . . . Since he couldn't,

however; since he couldn't . . . It wouldn't help to come home with a bastard in tow, or with such a wench for a wife. That would be worse. His father would have to manage; he wasn't always so bad.

He would write a sensible letter that sounded hopeful, and promise to come home in a year or two. His father wouldn't kill himself. People who went about talking about it never did. It was only a whim of his father's to have him home, anyway. His love wasn't so deep as all that; it was just something that had occurred to him; sick people had so many fancies. Gunnar hadn't noticed that his father's love had been so burning before. . . .

No; he'd have to go. He'd talk with the girl once more, but if that was no use — then there'd be no other way out. Then, too, he'd get out into the wide world that he'd dreamed of.

One day Helge came home from the town with a letter for Anna. Gunnar had gone to America.

"If you hear any evil of me, you mustn't believe it," he wrote in closing. "But even if it's all a lie, the suspicion clings to one anyway. I'll come back in a year or two when the whole affair is forgotten and then I'll explain everything to you better."

Anna took to her bed.

The worst part was telling Enok about it, and he had to be told, or he'd hear it somewhere else. In her distress she took counsel with Torkjell, and they worked out a way to break it to Enok gently. Torkjell promised to do it.

They had to go to the peat bog the day after and then Torkjell told him. "I must tell you," he

said. "I met Helge yesterday evening and he had news from Gunnar: that you mustn't be hard on him, but that he had a great longing to see some of the sights of the world before he came home for good. He'd won some money in a lottery, too; so he's going away for a time till he thinks he's learned enough. He has great thoughts has Gunnar; some day you'll see him in parliament."

Enok stared at him. Where was Gunnar going to?

"Oh, almost anywhere," said Torkjell. "He's always had such a yearning to see foreign lands; he's going first to see some of the wonderful fine machines that they've invented in America."

"America — oh, if he will only come home again!"

"You can wager that he'll come home. Heh! A farm like Haave isn't to be picked up on the street every day."

"But he didn't say anything about it when he was home last."

"He wasn't certain about it himself then and he didn't want to worry you."

Enok couldn't understand. Torkjell talked on and on and made the whole matter seem casual, till suddenly Enok turned on his heel and set off toward the house with Torkjell after him. Enok hitched up the brown mare, was going to town; he'd been so shaken by the news that he'd have to get some more information about it.

"Well, you mustn't believe all the gossip that you hear," Torkjell cautioned him. "You know that

there's always more or less talk about young lads that go their own way."

More and more disturbed, Enok drove off the farm; he almost broke the mare's wind on the journey. The first person that he met in town was Student Olsen. He came up, erect and stiff, and greeted Enok and offered his "condolences." He was drunk and spoke in his pompous vein.

"Yes, there always was a wild nature in the lad; I saw that before. And when you slip a colt like that out into a wide pasture . . .

"You must forgive him, my friend Enok. He fell before a power greater than his own; he fell before a power before which we all fall; he fell before the power of a woman."

Enok started, asked questions, wanted the details, but Olsen was in a mood for sermonizing.

"Joshua, or Jesus, as you call him, has conquered the World and the Devil and so forth, but one thing he forgot, my friend, one thing he forgot. In the smiling glance of woman the old serpent still lurks, and we still hear echoes of the fall of man in the classic words: 'The woman gave him and he did eat.' "

"Is there any woman who . . . ?"

"Even King David fell before the power of a woman, namely, the beauteous Bathsheba, who, with cunning forethought, bathed where the old sinner could see her from his roof. And why do I, Ole Christian Olsen, go about here like a fool before these boors, and like a bittern in the desert, if not because of those devilish females in Vika and the stranger that I met one day in the spring of youth

at that historic point where 'Virtue ends and Drammensveien * begins'? You mustn't be surprised at your son, Enok, for it stands written: 'Woman is a beast of prey of reptile kin, but man is a stupid buck of good sheep stock.' Adieu, Enok, take it like a man." He swung off down the road, stiff and haughty.

When Enok the next day drove home, he knew everything, but didn't understand. He had moved in a strange silence, and there had been such a rush and roar in his head that it had felt like a fired kiln. Before his eyes a black fleck danced continually. People that spoke to him could not understand why he didn't answer. Most of them didn't know him, and thought that he was merely drunk.

Anna lay in bed utterly wearied with sleeplessness and worry. She was most uneasy about Enok. When late in the evening she heard the cariole drive into the yard beneath her window, she felt so relieved that she fell asleep at once.

Serina set out some food for her father and then went back to her room. Torkjell put up the horse and came into the house with Enok. He thought that Enok was taking the matter quietly and sensibly, though he still seemed a little silent and moody. He could hardly be expected to be in a happy frame of mind, though.

"There's nothing to go into consumption over, Enok. The lad'll come back; it would be much worse if you had lost him."

"Yes."

* A street in Oslo.

"And you'll have a letter from him pretty soon, so you'll know how things are going with him."

"Yes."

"Well, good-night, and sleep well."

"Yes."

Enok sat down on the bench by the window; it was very close in the house. Tick, tock; tick, tock; tick, tock . . .

Suppose he took an axe and killed them all; then there'd be fewer mouths to feed. Travel to America? Many had left for America. Did somebody say that Gunnar had a bastard?

Everything was quiet in the house; he should have been somewhere else, but couldn't remember where. . . . Tick, tock; tick, tock . . . The axe? That was yesterday; that was yesterday. . . .

Time passed and Enok still sat there. He felt burning hot; it seemed as though a heated iron were clamped about his head. He wanted to go out, but if he went outside the door, there was something waiting that would take hold on him. He heard them now; they were talking together, and they were angry. He mustn't go out; he mustn't.

He didn't like the two gray men, however, that had come into the room. What did they want? They groped and peered about, silent-footed as cats. They came close to him — and stared at him. Did they know him? Such empty fearsome eyes as they had! One had got up on the bench in the corner opposite him. He was a queer one — sat lurking there and glaring at him, lurking and glaring, meditating evil. Evil eyes he had — cold and fearful. He glared.

What was he thinking of? They seemed to know him. . . .

He felt unsafe inside. Softly he got up from the bench, stole around the table and then edged step by step to the door. They plucked at him, kept plucking at him, but shrank away when he looked sharply at them. Hush! Softly he opened the door and slipped out, closed it after him. He went noiselessly out into the kitchen, and then out the back door. When that was behind him, he felt safe. "They are still sitting there; they are still sitting there, ha, ha."

But there were gray men here, too. He leaped behind the wagon shed, and hid himself, peered around the corner. Yes, there they came, more and more of them, as silently and lightly as shadows. He took to his heels, jumped the fence, ran down through the west field, farther and farther out, away down to the river meadow, but they still followed him.

More and more of them — a whole flock of gray and doddering old men. When he stopped, they stopped; when he walked on, they followed. He didn't like them to watch him that way. What did they want of him? He ran on again, down through the field, all the way to the river, and then followed the bank down and down. Every time he looked back they had come nearer. An ugly crew, more and more of them, a whole ring of gray men! They were going to surround him. He ran and ran.

A great lake barred his way, and now they came from all sides, down along the shore, down from the hills, and they came nearer and nearer,

close up to him, and plucked and plucked at him. He struck out at them and kicked, but suddenly he saw a great tall one with a horn.

His eyes swam in his head; an ugly grunt of laughter burst from his throat; he gave a great leap — straight out into the water.

A heavy sullen splash! Two or three big waves rushed in over the stones of the shore with a sighing swish. He didn't come up; the mud at the bottom must have sucked him down.

The south wind sighed across the water with a slight rustle, and along the shore the little ripples whimpered and plashed, softly and pleasantly, whimpered and plashed, whimpered and plashed. . . .

THE END

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